



Syrian tanks without ammunition on Golan

TEL AVIV (AP) — One of the compromises floated by the United States in Israel-Syria peace talks was to deploy Syrian tanks without ammunition on the Golan Heights, an Israeli daily said Wednesday. The proposal would allow Syria to save face, but undermine its ability to launch a surprise attack on Israel. Israel has demanded a demilitarized zone on the Golan Heights in any agreement. Haaretz said that the U.S. proposal was raised in the June 1995 meeting between the Israeli and Syrian chiefs of staff. It was not clear if the proposal would be on the agenda when Israeli-Syrian peace talks resume in Maryland next week. The editor of a Syrian government-run newspaper said Wednesday that Israel must do more than make "positive statements" about its declared desire to accelerate the pace of peace talks with Syria. "In order to guarantee the success of the next round of peace talks there must be a transfer from the rhetorical statements to a stage of serious work to ensure the components of a just and lasting peace," wrote Mohammad Kheir Al Wadi, editor of the Tishrin daily. Peres: Peace possible this year, page 12

Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published by the Jordan Press Foundation
جوردان تايمز يومية مستقلة عن المؤسسة الصحفية الأردنية، الرأى

France: Overall peace within reach

BEIRUT (AP) — Declaring that a comprehensive peace in the Middle East is within reach, France's foreign minister Wednesday wound up a visit to Lebanon during which he sought a role for his country in a settlement. "I'm optimistic. I think peace is within reach," Herve de Charette told reporters at the end of his talks in Beirut before heading for Damascus. "It seems to me that today we're closer than any other day to a common desire to resolve all the difficulties and problems," he told a news conference at the presidential palace in suburban Baabda. Mr. De Charette said he expected Lebanese-Israeli negotiations to resume and urged a reduction in tension and violence. Lebanese Foreign Minister Faris Boutros said after meeting the French minister Tuesday that Paris has offered to participate in any peacekeeping force that may be needed if Lebanon and Israel sign a peace treaty. However, he said it was premature to discuss the subject further before the resumption of Lebanon's peace negotiations with Israel.

Volume 21 Number 6126

AMMAN THURSDAY-FRIDAY, JANUARY 18-19, 1996, SHA'BAN 27-28, 1416

Price: Jordan 150 Fils

Arafat headed for 'massive victory'

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Yasser Arafat will win a landslide 80 per cent of the vote in Saturday's election of a Palestinian president and self-rule council, boosted by solid backing from supporters of Hamas, according to a poll released. The survey, carried out by the independent Palestinian research group JMCC for Israeli public television, indicated that Mr. Arafat would take 80.7 per cent in the presidential race against 7.2 per cent for his only challenger, West Bank socialist activist Samiha Khalil. The poll said that 62 per cent of those queried who identified themselves as supporters of Hamas indicated they would vote for Mr. Arafat.

Israel expects Pope by 1997

VATICAN CITY (AP) — A long-awaited visit by Pope John Paul II to Israel may come as early as this year, an Israeli cabinet member said Wednesday after talks with the pontiff. "It is more likely to take place in 1997, but I don't exclude 1996," Shimon Stretre, minister of religious affairs, told reporters. The Vatican provided no details of their meeting. The Pope accepted a formal invitation made nearly two years ago by the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. He has said often he wants to go but has not set a date.

Former Qatari emir told Cairo talks

CAIRO (AFP) — President Hosni Mubarak and the former emir of Qatar held talks Wednesday in meetings suggesting deepening divisions in the Gulf. Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani arrived Tuesday for a three-day visit and was met by Mr. Mubarak at the airport. He has been ousting Arab countries recently to tell their leaders he intends to return to power in Qatar. In an unexpected visit, Bahraini Information Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Mutawa visited Cairo Wednesday and met Sheikh Khalifa. He reportedly complained about Qatar Television. Earlier this week, the television station, which is widely watched in the Gulf, interviewed Shiite opposition leaders from Bahrain and announced that it will interview Saudi dissidents soon.

Clinton behind Dole in latest poll

WASHINGTON (AFP) — President Bill Clinton would lose out with just 48 per cent of the vote against 49 per cent or Republican Bob Dole if a presidential election were held now, a poll released Wednesday found. The USA Today/CNN/Gallup poll is the second in two weeks to show Mr. Clinton trailing the Republican presidential hopeful. Last month the president held a wide lead. In a Dec. 18 poll, he enjoyed 52 per cent support against 43 per cent for Mr. Dole, the Senate majority leader. According to the latest, 46 per cent of Americans approve of the way Mr. Clinton has worked while 47 per cent disapprove.

Rocket stolen from Cyprus military depot

NICOSIA (AFP) — Thieves have stolen anti-tank rockets and grenades from a Cypriot army depot, the official news agency CNA reported Wednesday. It said 78 grenades and three rockets had disappeared from a depot near the southern coastal town of Larnaca. A Cypriot army spokesman said an inquiry had been launched. The authorities fear the theft may be linked to a wave of underworld violence that has shaken the normally sleepy island, in which President Jafcos Clerides has implicated the police force.

Israel keen to make economic success of peace with Jordan

Peres speaks of warmest feelings and respect for Jordan, says dividends of peace are slow but sure
'King Hussein captured the heart of Israelis'

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

ISRAEL HAS very warm feelings towards Jordan and is determined to help the Kingdom and make an economic success of the state of the peace between the two countries, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said.

Mr. Peres also paid high tribute to His Majesty King Hussein and said the Monarch had captured the hearts of the Israeli people, particularly with the visit he paid to the Jewish state on Jan. 10.

"His Majesty has shown what a civilised leader can do for his people," Mr. Peres said in an interview with the Jordan Times at his office in West Jerusalem. "The King came specially to visit two injured pilots, spent the day, (and) he was very moved," the prime minister said of His Majesty's visit to Israel, where he also visited two Jordanian soldiers undergoing treatment.

Mr. Peres said the Israeli people were moved by the King's "great personal feelings" towards assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, and said the Monarch had "great eloquence" and "a human touch wherever he moves."

"I think he took the heart

of the Israeli people," he said, adding that he himself was "very much" affected emotionally by the King's visit, described by Israelis as having drawn the biggest crowd that ever cheered a visiting head of state through Israeli streets.

Other points Mr. Peres made in the interview were: — Israel finds little need for the international guarantees that Pope John Paul called for to preserve the religious status of Jerusalem because the Jewish state is committed to respecting the religious rights of all in the Holy City.

"Jerusalem should be religiously open to all religions," but "politically it cannot be run by two different parties."

Reminded that this obviously meant a pre-determination of one important element in the final status negotiations with the Palestinians beginning in May, he said, "We are stating our own position and we are not stating anyone else's position."

"We have said time and again that we are not going to change status quo (in East Jerusalem) generally. We are not going to enter into the status quo concerning the inner Muslim arrangements. Whatever was affiliated with Jordan or the Palestinians (when Israel occupied East



Shimon Peres

Jerusalem in 1967), it belongs to them."

Mr. Peres skirted a question on Israel's intentions concerning Palestinians living in diaspora by referring only to the multilateral committee, discussing the fate of displaced Palestinians, which, he said, is "trying to find solutions."

He said Israel's contacts with the Gulf Arab states were continuing and Jordan could play a key role in advancing them.

"We are in contact to reach an understanding. I think Jordan can play a leading role in it. Some of our meetings with the representatives of the Gulf states took place in

Jordan. I think after the Amman conference (the Oct. 29-31 Middle East and North Africa economic summit), Jordan has gained the status and respect for the Jordanian Kingdom and its King in the eyes of many."

There are "indications" that some of the Gulf countries will announce diplomatic ties with Israel soon, but "I would not like to indicate them before the indications become realities."

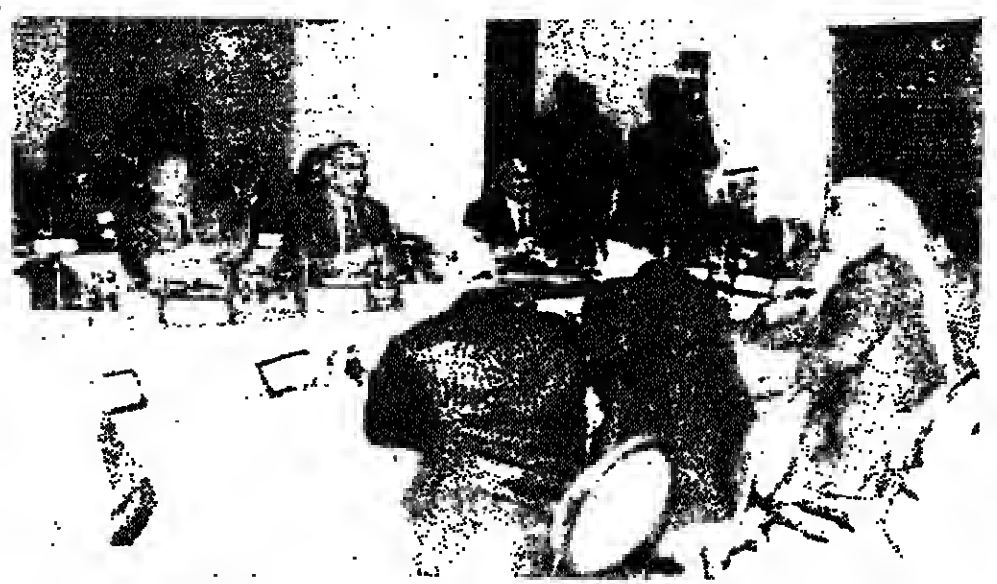
— Jordanians should not wait for a final Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement before moving to consolidate relations at the popular level with Israel.

"The Egyptians are not waiting for the Jordanians (and) the Palestinians are not waiting for the Jordanians," he said. "The process goes simultaneously, but not on a conditional way."

According to Mr. Peres, Israel made peace with the Palestinians "out of its own free choice and free will" and no doubts should be cast on Israel's intentions to negotiate a final settlement with the Palestinians in good faith.

"We have fulfilled every article in the (Oslo) agreement on the dot and on the date. Nothing was postponed. The second Oslo

(Continued on page 7)



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan on Wednesday attends a meeting of the Arab Thought Forum on the 1990 Gulf crisis (Petra photo).

'Jordan does not interfere in others' internal affairs'

ATF resumes in-depth review of Gulf crisis

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan stressed on Wednesday that Jordan has always differentiated between the "legitimate Jordanian role in helping other countries and interference in other countries' internal affairs" which has never been its policy.

Speaking at a breakfast meeting with Kuwaiti and Iraqi participants in a seminar on "the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait" organised by the Arab Thought Forum (ATF), the Crown Prince said Jordan has never had "ready-made recipes" for other countries' problems.

Referring to reactions by some people to a recent statement by His Majesty King Hussein saying federation might be one of the solutions to the Iraqi problem, Prince Hassan said: "It might be imperative here to stress that there is no Jordanian ready-made recipe for any Arab problem."

Prince Hassan dwelt on the

indifference of the international community to the suffering of the Iraqi people and stressed the need to exploit international restructuring processes to resolve crises facing minority groups through peaceful means, as is being done in former Yugoslavia.

Prince Hassan dealt with several working papers presented to the seminar, and said scholarly work should focus on the intellectual movement since the end of the past century in order to be able to plan for a better future.

He described the ATF meeting held in Doha in April 1994 as one of the most exciting meetings, recalling a call by him and Sheikh Hamad Ben Khalifa of Qatar to have scientific dialogue as the only means to resolving problems.

"This call was favourably met by the forum members, mainly by my brothers from Kuwait, such as Dr. Hassan Ibrahim, Dr. Mohammad

Rumeihi and Dr. Badriya Al Awadi," Prince Hassan said, paying tribute to the latter, saying the seminar was her brainchild.

Prince Hassan thanked all ATF members who contributed to the success of the Doha meeting and said all of them were keen to resume discussion of the Gulf crisis and the repercussions of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in a scientific and realistic manner.

Prince Hassan also tackled an analytical study conducted by ATF members and said the study drew mixed reactions. "This study finally moved to analysing the role of the ATF and in its conclusions underlined the importance of resorting to the language of dialogue and to convene this seminar to discuss an important and complicated issue so as to prove our ability to face mental challenges together," Prince Hassan said.

(Continued on page 7)

Killing of 2 Israeli soldiers will not affect self-rule polls

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres said Wednesday that the slaying of two soldiers by guerrillas would not disrupt or delay historic Palestinian elections to be held this weekend.

But he also called on Yasser Arafat's Palestinian National Authority (PNA) "to act more forcefully against terrorist groups because they represent a real threat" to the future of the self-rule government.

"This attack will not influence the elections because we will not allow terrorists to set the date of the vote," Mr. Peres said of the shooting late Tuesday on the West Bank in which an officer and soldier were killed.

"Israel will act with all its force against the underground Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements which are doing everything to under-

mine the peace process," he said.

The army said Palestinians opened fire with automatic weapons on a car carrying the two soldiers through a southern West Bank area near Hebron where several villages passed to partial Palestinian control last month.

It was the first deadly attack against Israeli forces since Israel handed over control of six main West Bank towns and hundreds of villages late last year ahead of Saturday's election of a Palestinian self-rule government.

Hebron Mayor Mustafa Natche told Israeli Radio after the attack that Mr. Arafat had been "disappointed by this incident."

"But he is aware that some Palestinian extremists could carry out attacks to torpedo the electoral process," said

Mr. Natche, who met with Mr. Arafat in Jericho shortly after the shooting.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, which came hours after two similar incidents in Palestinian-controlled Gaza Strip in which Israeli troops were fired upon but not hit.

Late Monday an Israeli civilian was shot and wounded while shopping in the Palestinian-controlled West Bank town of Bethlehem. Israeli military officials responded to the earlier attacks by saying that an escalation of such incidents could be expected ahead of Saturday's vote.

Palestinian opponents of the peace process have pledged to disrupt the vote in retaliation for the recent assassination by presumed Israeli agents of two guerrilla

(Continued on page 7)

2 killed, 33 injured in collision

AMMAN (Petra) — Two people were killed and 33 others injured in a collision involving two buses and a truck Wednesday evening near Al Shomari Wildlife Reserve (Azraq area), the Civil Defence Department (CDD) said.

The CDD said passengers aboard the two buses, both with Saudi licence plates, were Saudi, Bahraini, Palestinian and Syrian nationals. They said the truck had Syrian registration plates.

Those with serious injuries were transported from the nearby Mawafaq Al Salti airstrip to the Queen Alia International Airport by a plane to receive medical treatment in Amman, the sources added.

Weather creates problems

Another CDD report said department personnel in Maan Governorate rescued 115 tourists of various nationalities who were stranded in the ancient city of Petra because of floods. The CDD said the tourists were transported to safe areas.

The department said that its personnel also rescued 30 residents of Wadi Musa area who were trapped in their cars in the Al Hishah park area because of snow. The CDD did not report any casualties.

According to a Public Security Department (PSD) report issued late Wednesday, several roads in Maan, Karak and Tafila governorates in southern Jordan were partially blocked because of snow.

The PSD said the Shohak-Wadi Maan, Dallagha-Rasif-Rajef and the Tafila cement factory roads were partially closed. The department urged motorists in the south to drive carefully.

(Continued on page 7)

Aziz confirms Iraqi move to discuss oil-for-food exports

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq's deputy prime minister, Tariq Aziz, said on Wednesday that he had sent a letter to the United Nations expressing Baghdad's willingness to discuss selling oil for badly needed food and medicines.

But he rejected U.N. Resolution 986, which allows for the sale of oil to meet humanitarian needs under strict international controls, a condition that Iraq has steadfastly rejected as an attack on its sovereignty.

"Iraq's position regarding Resolution 986 remains unchanged," Mr. Aziz said in the letter, adding that "Iraq is willing to respond to a U.N. invitation to discuss selling oil for food and medicines," according to the official INA news agency.

Mr. Aziz said the letter was "the result of the contacts made over the last few months with (U.N. Secretary General) Boutros Ghali and certain members of the Security Council who have friendly and balanced attitudes towards Iraq."

"We have detected progress in understanding of Iraqi objections," he said. Under the resolution, part of the revenues must be put aside to help Kurds in northern Iraq, who oppose to Baghdad government.

This letter represents an "exploration of the possibilities, and not a change in principles," Mr. Aziz said, adding that it was "preliminary to predict the success or failure of this initiative."

"If there is a new approach in relations between the U.N.

and us, without affecting the fundamentals, such as the sovereignty and unity of the country, then we are prepared to examine it," he said, adding there were "essential issues that we cannot sacrifice."

President Saddam Hussein marked the fifth anniversary of the Gulf war on Wednesday with a plea for reconciliation with the Arab states who joined the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq.

"We can only be tolerant" towards Arab countries that have shunned Iraq since its troops marched into Kuwait in August 1990, President Saddam said in a speech broadcast on national television.

Although President Saddam refrained from attacking (Continued on page 7)

Boat hijackers demand end to Russian assault on Chechens

ANKARA (Agencies) — A pro-Chechen commando that hijacked a Black Sea ferry carrying more than 200 people vowed Wednesday to sail on to the Bosphorus, where it has vowed to blow up the ship unless Chechen rebels under attack by Russian forces are allowed to go home.

"We have enough fuel to take us to Istanbul, and we'll go there," Mohammad Tokcan, the commando leader, told the Anatolian news agency by telephone.

"We have launched this action to attract the attention of the whole world to the Checheny problem and Russian atrocities in the north Caucasus, and we're determined to continue."

Mr. Tokcan, a Turkish

national who traces his origin to Georgia's separatist Abkhazia region, said his group would release one hostage, a Turkish police officer with diabetes, as soon as possible.

The ship Avrasya was seized Tuesday night in the eastern Turkish port of Trabzon. It was to have gone to the Russian resort of Sochi. Turkish officials Wednesday urged the commando to give up as the ship sailed westward toward Istanbul, trailed by two assault boats from the Turkish coast guard.

As of 1630 GMT, the ship was approaching the port of Sinop and had another 560 kilometres to go until it reaches Istanbul. Officials said that at its current average speed of 10 miles per

hour, the ferry will not reach Istanbul before Friday morning at the earliest.

"We are still trying to persuade them to enter Sinop, because first the weather is bad, and secondly, they will soon be out of fuel," an interior ministry spokesman told AFP.

The hijackers think they have enough fuel, but they don't. Russia has urged Turkey to ensure the safety of the passengers, most of whom are believed to be Russian, Turkish Foreign Minister Deniz Baykal said.

Security has been tightened around Russian diplomatic missions in Ankara, Istanbul and Trabzon as de-

(Continued on p. 3e 7)

Gulf Arabs fear peace with Israel

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Gulf Arab officials, economists and businessmen meeting here have voiced reluctance over normalising ties with Israel amid fears Middle East peace will turn the Jewish state into the region's economic superpower.

"The lifting of the direct boycott of Israel must wait" to give Gulf states time to "attract foreign investment," 80 delegates said late Tuesday at the close of the first Gulf conference on the economic impact of peace.

The 1994 lifting of the Gulf's indirect boycott on foreign firms dealing with Israel "led to an increase in the volume of foreign investment in Israel but did not attract new investors to the Gulf," delegates said in a statement.

Delegates said they feared "Israeli dominance over the economies of Arab countries," and the emergence of the Jewish state as the "region's financial capital."

They also feared conflicts would shift to the Gulf following an Arab-Israeli peace, with some calling for financing development projects in neighbouring countries to alleviate the poverty that could lead to unrest.

The president of Kuwait's chamber of commerce and industry, Abdul Aziz Al Saqr, said: "The architects of the peace process consider the Gulf countries to be only a source of financing and oil."

"The role of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries is being marginalised in the map of the region and their economic future is not being taken into consideration," Mr. Saqr said.

The GCC countries — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United

Arab Emirates and Oman — must "create a common market" to fight "the negative economic consequences of the peace process," he said.

Delegates also agreed on the need to implement reforms and free their economies from "bureaucratic burdens."

Prominent Kuwaiti economist Jasssem Al Saadoun asserted that "our role is that of donor countries and at the role of financier."

"For now we can express our reservations but when Syria and Lebanon make peace with Israel, it will be difficult to refuse," he added.

Delegates said there was a "serious question about the deal with a country Gulf officials and businessmen know little about. Some delegates complained there was no clear Gulf policy towards Israel."

"We have little information about Israel. We must study the Israeli economy to determine what its future role will be," delegates said in the final statement.

Some were less pessimistic. Gulf Investment Company President Khaled Al Fayez said "fears of Israeli hegemony over the Arab economy" were overplayed and recalled "from a lack of understanding of Israel's capabilities, which is not an economic giant."

Mr. Saadoun said: "I'm not trying to frighten you but Israel's economy represents the volume of the economies of Egypt and Syria combined, and will become even stronger when the Arab boycott is lifted," Mr. Saqr said.

The conference, entitled "Expected Repercussions of the Peace Agreement on the Economies of the GCC countries," was sponsored by the GCC Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Sheikh wants to force divorce of Mahfouz

CAIRO (AFP) — A Muslim sheikh notorious for taking liberal intellectuals to court said Wednesday he would try to get Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz declared a heretic and ordered divorced from his wife.

Sheikh Yousef Al Badri told Al Massawa newspaper: "The only legal recourse to prove Naguib Mahfouz's apostasy would be to bring a case demanding his divorce."

Mr. Mahfouz, Egypt's best-known writer who is in his 80s, has been married to his wife, Ateyat Allah, since 1954. They have two grown-up daughters.

Under Islamic law, a Muslim may not be married to a heretic.

Mr. Mahfouz angered Muslim fundamentalists with his 1959 book, "The Children of Gebelawi," condemned as blasphemous, and he was stabbed and seriously wounded in October 1994 militants outside his Cairo home.

He spent 50 days in hospital after the attack, mostly in intensive care, and has not been able to write since.

Sunni Muslim's highest authority Al Azhar banned "The Children of Gebelawi" because it depicted God as a father and the prophets as his sons.

Sheikh Badri said he could not give a date for any trial. "I just give orders to the

lawyers," he said. "If the case comes to court, I will be afraid. First they have to prove my novels are apostasy and that will be for the court but they will not do it."

But he complained: "Badri is using a right without taking into account the harmful effects it will have on the freedom of thought and speech."

"It is up to parliament to solve this problem and the culture minister must do something" to prevent fundamentalists from using court action to ban work by artists and intellectuals who do not share their views.

Sheikh Badri told Al Massawa he was also considering bringing cases against other 40 writers.

"Egyptian fundamentalists base their prosecutions on 'hisba', an Islamic law allowing Muslims to use the courts to ban anything judged contrary to Islam."

They have already succeeded in banning a film by leading director Youssef Shabab and ordering a university professor divorced from his wife on the grounds that a Muslim cannot be married to a heretic.

Mr. Mahfouz became the only Arab writer to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968.

Dutch visit to Orient House sparks row

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AP) — Dutch Foreign Minister Hans van Mierlo visited Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) headquarters in East Jerusalem on Wednesday, ignoring protests by Israel which feels such meetings undermine its claims of sovereignty over all of the Holy City.

The top PLO official in Jerusalem, Faisal Husseini, praised the Dutch for not being deterred by Israel's complaints.

"It is a sign that Holland has a stable policy," he told reporters after a two-hour meeting with Mr. Van Mierlo. "Holland, as you know, did not recognise the annexation of East Jerusalem."

Mr. Van Mierlo refused comment. He is in Israel as part of a large Dutch delegation that includes Dutch Prime Minister Wim Kok.

Jerusalem's mayor, Ehud Olmert, levelled scathing criticism against Mr. Kok over his policy on Jerusalem.

Mr. Olmert said he told Mr. Kok in a meeting Tuesday evening that Mr. Van Mierlo's visit was an "insult to Israel that is inexplicable."

Asked Wednesday how Mr. Kok responded, Mr. Olmert said: "He did not like it. He said, 'well, is this all you want to talk to me about?'"

Olmert aide Hagai Elias said Mr. Kok threatened to cut short his time with Mr. Olmert but that in the end the meeting lasted the allotted 30 minutes.

Mr. Kok's spokesman, Eef Brouwers, said Wednesday that Mr. Olmert and Mr. Kok had differences of opinion, but that "there were no hard feelings from our side."

"We have so many years of

experience and we know how to handle people with all views," Mr. Brouwers said.

In Israel's parliament, or Knesset, Mr. Kok sat in on the start of the session as a guest of honour Wednesday. Speaker Shevah Weiss spoke of good relations between the two countries and recalled the Netherlands' role in protection Jews against the Nazis during World War II.

At the end of the speech, legislator Youssef Bagad from the far-right Mokedet party stood up in the plenum and said: "I join in the welcome but must condemn the visit of the Dutch foreign minister to the Orient House."

The European Union (EU) has decided that its foreign ministers will continue to visit the Orient House despite Israeli objections.

The discord over the Orient House was marked

contrast to the otherwise amicable visit during which the Dutch offered Israel help to create artificial islands along its Mediterranean coast and build a subway in Tel Aviv.

"The Netherlands have some knowhow in that respect," Mr. Kok said after meeting with Tel Aviv Mayor Ronni Milo and city planners involved in the subway project.

"What we hope for is to cooperate, to have commercial and economic cooperation, between ... companies of our two countries," Mr. Kok said.

The Dutch leader was to meet with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in the Gaza Strip on Thursday before returning home. The Netherlands, along with France, are drawing up plans to build a port in Gaza for \$70 million.

Women vow to fight for rights in self-rule council

NABULS (AFP) — Women candidates are vowing to fight discrimination from within the self-rule council which is to emerge from the Palestinian elections on Saturday.

"In an oriental society such as ours, we must prevent the council from bringing in discriminatory laws against women," said Ghada Zeidan of a women's committee formed at the outset of the peace process with Israel.

"Already, the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has said passports can only be issued to women if they have the authorisation of a male guardian, something which sets a dangerous precedent," she said.

The election campaign, lacking in real political debate, has resounded with promises to set up an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital and to free all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jail.

Women's issues have been sidelined and only 28 women are running against 644 men in the council elections, although they account for more than half of the population.

Adopting a progressive line, the women candidates want equal opportunity, freedom to choose marriage partners, and the right to higher education.

"There will be no Palestinian democracy without equality between men and

women," said Ghada Soghair, director of a Jerusalem women's centre which is lobbying for a greater role for women in public life.

Ms. Soghair and representatives of other associations held a public meeting at Nablus University on the West Bank this week as part of a tour to support the women candidates.

"We've decided to stop being a silent majority," she said to applause from the crowd, made up of around 100 women and 40 men.

But a male candidate, independent Assaad Salem, voiced a reservation. "The voter must make his choice on one criterion: the ability of the candidate," he said.

Women's activists tried in vain before the polls to assure a 30 per cent quota within the council.

On the positive side, the only challenger to Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat in a presidential poll the same day is a woman, 72-year-old feminist and rank outsider Samiha Khalil.

But she is focusing her campaign on opposition to the PLO's autonomy accords with Israel rather than women's issues.

In contrast, Samar Hawash of the leftist Palestinian People's Party has put women at the centre of her campaign. "Equality does not only benefit women, it holds the key to a pluralist society," she said.

PLO offers compromise in Achille Lauro case involving Yasser Arafat

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) has offered to create a "peace institute" to help fight terrorism in a lawsuit stemming from the 1985 Achille Lauro hijacking, the Jerusalem Post reported Wednesday.

The deal will involve offering "significant" jobs in the new institute to two daughters of Leon Klinghoffer, a wheelchair-bound passenger who was shot and dumped overboard during the hijacking by Palestinians, the newspaper reported.

The daily quoted a letter from PLO attorneys to a New York court which is hearing the civil suit filed by Crown Travel, which booked the Klinghoffer's tickets for the cruise.

U.S. District Court Judge Louis Stanton had ordered PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to testify before Jan. 12 in the civil suit or face a seizure of PLO property. The letter offering a compromise deal was dated Jan. 9, the newspaper said.

In the letter, signed by former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark

who is representing the PLO, the organisation calls for creation of the peace institute "to memorialise the tragic death of Leon Klinghoffer, as well as other victims of violence in the region of all religions and nationalities."

It said Klinghoffer's daughters accepted the offer and will "perform a significant role in the administration of the project."

"The PLO, or its successor, will make an initial contribution" to the institute, the letter said without specifying an amount.

Mr. Arafat has denied any role in the hijacking of the Achille Lauro, an Italian liner seized during a Mediterranean cruise, saying the hijackers belonged to a group hostile to the PLO.

The Post quoted sources in the Stanton's office as saying that the PLO offer was part of a request to delay Mr. Arafat's testimony in the case until after historic Palestinian self-rule elections to be held Saturday.

The proceedings have been postponed until Feb. 13.

Islamic camp shows its muscle, scorns Palestinian election campaign

GAZA CITY (AFP) — The Islamic camp has staged a show of force by drawing the largest crowds during the Palestinian election campaign while pouring scorn on the self-rule polls.

"Candidates are selling their illusions in return for votes," Alaa Safawi, director of Islamic Jihad's weekly Al-Istiqal, said. "It's a beautiful day out there but those election banners and pennants are blocking the sun."

Hamas and Islamic Jihad are boycotting Saturday's polls and denounce the autonomy accords as a farce which can only serve the interests of Israel.

They reject the assurances of Palestinian National Authority (PNA) head Yasser Arafat — of an independent

state with Jerusalem as its capital and the return of refugees — as empty promises.

Only half of the Palestinian people have the right to vote, Islamic militants point out, while refugees and the displaced in the Middle East and around the world are left without a voice.

The militants refuse to give up the armed struggle "to liberate Palestine from the (Mediterranean) sea to the River (Jordan)," meaning the destruction of the state of Israel.

"It's obvious that the powers of the future (self-rule) council will be limited by the Oslo accords (on autonomy)," said a leading Hamas figure in Gaza, Sheikh Ahmad Bahr.

"This council will not be

able to decide anything political, especially about the Jewish settlers and the (Palestinian) refugees. But I hope it will be able to improve the economic and social situation at least."

Since the assassination by suspected Israeli agents of Hamas bomb-maker Yahya Ayyash on Jan. 5, militant groups have drawn crowds of tens of thousands both in Gaza and the West Bank.

The rallies have dwarfed the electoral meetings of Arafat's Fateh party which attract only a few people at best.

Hamas resisted pressure from the PNA to take part in the polls for the sake of Palestinian unity, although it agreed not to urge the electorate to stay away from the

polls. But the movement was shaken by internal dissent over whether to participate or risk being left out of the new reality on the ground, and three Hamas members put in their candidacies before withdrawing them.

Imad Faluji, one of its officials who decided to contest the polls anyway, was sacked and he is now running as an "Independent-Muslim" on the grounds that the Islamic camp must have a say in final-status talks starting in May.

Such arguments do not impress Al Istiqal however. "All the candidates are promising to liberate Jerusalem, but how can when they can't even get a permit to visit?" it asked.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Syrian premier to visit Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Syrian Prime Minister Mahmoud Al Zoubi is to pay an official visit to Iran next month, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said Wednesday. The visit, to begin on Feb. 20, seeks to "develop economic cooperation" between the two countries, it said without giving further details. Mr. Zoubi's scheduled visit comes amid tense relations between Tehran and Damascus because of Syria's support for the United Arab Emirates in its islands dispute with Iran and resumed negotiations with Israel. Iranian Vice President Hassan Habibi called off a trip to Syria early this month to protest Damascus's stand on the Gulf islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tumb and Lesser Tumb. Iran is also upset with its strategic ally in the Middle East for resuming peace talks with Israel. However, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati said during a visit to Kuwait on Tuesday that ties between his country and Syria were "good and brotherly," although they did not "necessarily have to have identical positions on all political issues."

S. Arabia bans baby milk commercials

DUBAI (R) — Baby milk formula importers in Saudi Arabia will have to be more creative in promoting their products as a blanket ban on all commercials for breastfeeding alternatives takes effect. "The commerce ministry prohibited all baby milk importers from advertising in the local media," Arabic-language daily Al Eqtisadiyah reported on Wednesday. It was not clear when the ban takes effect. "Advertising campaigns encourage the use of alternatives to natural feeding," it quoted the commerce ministry as saying. The paper said the ban applies to all 35 commercial baby milk brands on the Saudi market, which account for a large share of advertising space in the local media.

Jewish soldiers return to German army

TEL AVIV (AFP) — For the first time since the Nazi era, Jewish soldiers are serving in the German army, Bundeswehr Chief of Staff General Klaus Neumann said in an interview published here Wednesday. In the interview in the mass circulation daily Yediot Aharanot, Gen. Neumann said about 100 Jewish volunteers were serving in the army, including in combat units, and would soon be able to obtain kosher food. "If these soldiers request it, they can also meet with a Jewish chaplain, just as we have priests for Christians and muftis for Muslim troops," he told the newspaper. "I am thrilled that Jews volunteer to serve in our army," the German general said, adding: "Jews have always contributed to Germany and during World War I many were killed serving in the army, including senior officers." Since the end of World War II Jews have been exempt from mandatory military service in Germany. Gen. Neumann said the volunteers served 10-month tours, including basic training.

Sudan releases priest, seminarian

VATICAN CITY (AFP) — Sudanese authorities have released two Catholic churchmen detained since December, the Vatican newspaper reported Tuesday. Father Mark Lotede of Juba and seminarian Paul Lomana of Karthoum had been accused by local authorities of trying to cross into rebel-controlled areas, where their families live. Radio Vatican, in announcing their release, said the Sudanese government had "always accused the Sudanese episcopate of encouraging a hostile international policy towards their country."

Imprisoned Kurdish MP honoured

STRASBOURG (AFP) — The European Parliament on Wednesday presented its Sakharov human rights prize to the husband of imprisoned Kurdish Deputy Leyla Zana. Ms. Zana, elected to the Turkish parliament in 1991, was sentenced to 15 years in prison in March 1994 for advocating Kurdish rights. Her sentence was upheld by an appeal court last October and the Turkish authorities refused to allow her to travel to Strasbourg to receive the award in person. Her husband, Mehdi Zana, who himself spent 11 years as Turkish political prisoner, was only granted a passport on Monday afternoon. In a message from Ankara's Ulucanlar prison, Ms. Zana questioned the parliament's wisdom in deciding in December to authorise a customs union between the European Union and Turkey without having secured a meaningful commitment from the regime to improving its human rights record. "You are hoping that your gesture will assist the forces of democracy, strengthen the movement of democratisation and impede the progress of the Islamic fundamentalists," she wrote. "In the past people tend to rely on the wisdom of God. Do you have a tendency to rely on the goodwill and wisdom of the Turkish regime?"

Opium hidden in stomachs kills two

TEHRAN (AFP) — Two drug traffickers, a man and woman, were poisoned to death by over 1.5 kilograms of opium they had hidden in their stomachs to avoid detection, a newspaper reported Wednesday. The man, 23-year-old Ghassem Ghanbari, collapsed and immediately died on a bus in which he was travelling from Zahedan, in southeastern Sistan-Baluchistan province bordering Afghanistan, to Gorgan in northeastern Iran. Hamshahri daily said. Some 100 bags of opium of a total weight of one kilogramme were found in his stomach during an autopsy. In a separate incident, a woman died when a bag containing half a kilogramme of the drug ripped open in her stomach as she was travelling with her husband in southern Iran. As the authorities have stepped up the fight against drug smuggling, growing number of small-time traffickers hide drugs in their stomachs as a measure to avoid detection. Iran is a transit route for drugs originating in Afghanistan and Pakistan, destined for Europe.

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel: 7511149

PROGRAMME TWO
13:00 Hurricanes
13:15 Fireman Sam
13:45 My Secret Identity
14:00 NBA
15:05 The New Leave it to Beaver
15:30 Doc - Adventures of the Old West
16:30 Gillette World Sport Special
17:00 Sophie El Virgine
17:30 Varieties - Le Monde Est A Vous
19:00 News in French
19:15 Magazine - Archimede
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 Carol and Company
20:00 Doc - Magazine III
20:15 The Album Show
21:10 The New Avengers
22:00 News in English
22:25 Mini-series - Texas Justice I Part II
23:59 Series - Matlock

PRAYER TIMES

05:10 Fair
06:57 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:54 Duha
13:46 Asr
17:00 Maghrib
15:21 Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Smythfield, Tel. 811748
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632982
St. Joseph Church, Tel. 624590
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637480
De la Salle Church, Tel. 661757
Smythfield Church, Tel. 622266
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 635431
St. Michael Church, Tel. 625206
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 715261
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 715261
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 717751
Armenian International Church Tel. 625206
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel. 634329
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 645457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazareth Tel. 766913
The Evangelical Bible Church in Amman Tel. 812165

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology:
The weather is fair, with a light breeze, and a light rain, which will be cold, cloudy.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

and rainy all over the Kingdom. Snow is also expected to fall over areas 1,000 metres above sea level, and winds will become westerly active. The effect of the depression will last until Saturday.
In Agaba, skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy, with a chance of showers. Winds will be southerly active and seas rough.
Min./Max. temp.
Agaba 3/5
Dahsh 6/14
Jordan Valley 6/13
Yesterday's high temperature: Amman 14, Humidity readings: Amman 96 per cent, Agaba 33 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Mazen Al Nuhali 830435
Dr. Nidal Al Awd 751672
Dr. Fayez Al Dahban 759155
Dr. Muhammad Al Sawi 732086
Firas pharmacy 661912
Ferdous pharmacy 778336
Al Aswara pharmacy 837658
Nairouz pharmacy 625672
Al Salam pharmacy 636731
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shimshel pharmacy 837640
Nairouz pharmacy 625672
Najih pharmacy 847632
JRAID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Al Ouda Pharmacy 1-1
ZARQA:
Dr. Hilal Al Sayid 986702
Khafish pharmacy 985417

Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680101
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 0853200
Queen Aila Intl. Airport 0853200
University Hospital 845843
Akilch Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2
Jahel Amman Maternity 642362
Malha, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisan 667071
Shmeisan Hospital 669131
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdull 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdull 664164/6
Islamic, Al-Muhajirun 777011/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf 778111/2
Army, Al-Marka 891611/3
Queen Aila Hospital 602340/50
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 019983323

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 81381/3/2
Khalid Maternity, J. Amn 64281/6
AKILCH Maternity, J. Amn 642441/2
Jahel Amman Maternity 642362
Malha, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisan 667071
Shmeisan Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845843
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdull 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdull 664164/6
Islamic, Al-Muhajirun 777011/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashraf 778111/2
Army, Al-Marka 891611/3
Queen Aila Hospital 602340/50
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 019983323

18:25 Athens (RJ)
19:00 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
19:30 Moscow (RJ)
21:35 Rome, Tunis (RJ)
22:00 Agaba (add) (RJ)
23:30 Larnaca (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

12:40 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
12:40 Sharjah (AH)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)
14:00 Doha (QV)
16:10 Paris, Damascus (AF)
19:00 Beirut (ME)
20:20 Cairo (MS)
23:10 Istanbul (TK)
01:15 London (KL)
01:30 Amsterdam (KL)

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

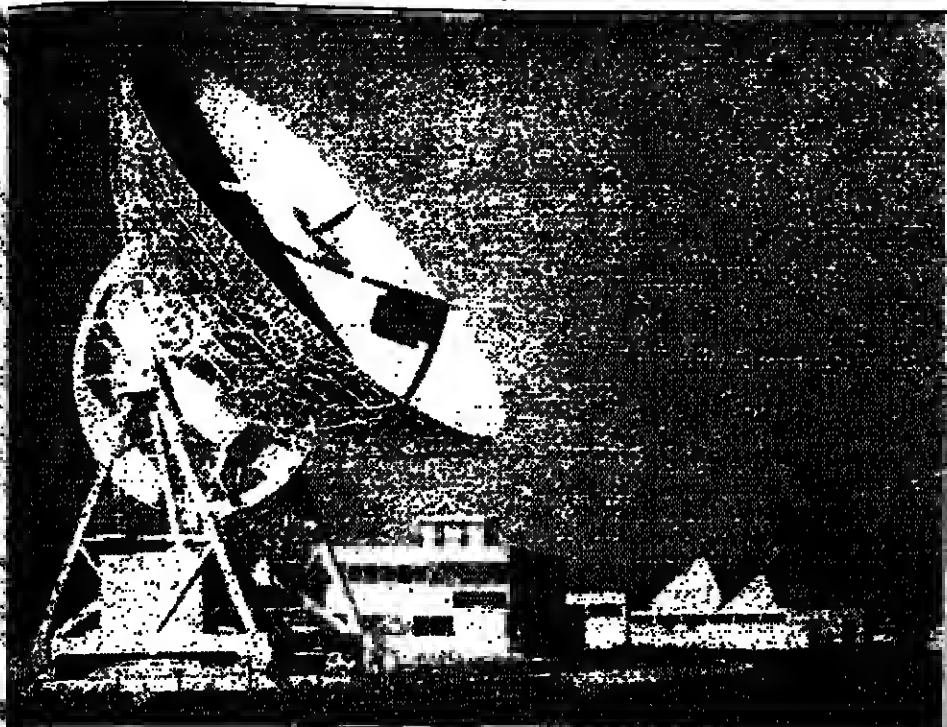
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)
06:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
08:20 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
09:00 Agaba (RJ)
09:30 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:30 Sharjah (RJ)
09:30 New Delhi (add) (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 Al Ain (add) (RJ)
10:25 Colombo (RJ)
10:25 London (RJ)
14:30 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:00 Abu Dhabi (RJ)
17:25 Casablanca (RJ)

20:10 Cairo (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Jakarta (add) (RJ)
22:00 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
22:15 Abu Dhabi, Kuala Lumpur (add) (RJ)
23:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:00 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
23:00 Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta (RJ)

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple 700/500
Banana 650/650
Banana (Mukammur) 580/580
Banana (imported) 850/700
Cabbage 80/30
Carrot 220/190
Cauliflower 100/90
Cucumbers (large) 150/100
Cucumbers (small) 300/200
Eggplant 170/120
Garlic 900/650
Onion (red) 220/150
Lemon 500/200
Marrow (large) 80/50
Marrow (small) 130/80
Onion (green) 120/80
Onion (dry) 200/150
Orange 400/300
Pepper (hot) 800/450
Pepper (sweet) 400/300
Potato 220/150
Radish 130/80
String Beans 500/350
Spinach 120/80
Tomato 120/80



The telecommunications sector is expected to witness increased growth as the private sector gets involved in the business (File photo)

Private sector to have a bigger share of the telecommunications business

By Ghalia Alul
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — In an effort to develop and introduce new services to the telecommunications sector in Jordan, the government has established the Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (TRC) with the aim of "developing the telecommunications infrastructure and providing the necessary environment to stimulate the development of more and better telecommunications services which will support the economic, social and cultural development of Jordan," a statement issued by TRC said Wednesday.

The TRC, an independent body, will provide a range of services to Jordanians through implementing the government policy for the telecommunications sector, the statement said.

A TRC official told the Jordan Times that any commercial entity will be free

to apply for these licences under specific conditions.

Over the past year, the TCC has issued licenses for the introduction of advanced telecommunications facilities in the Kingdom, such as paging services and mobile phones provided by two private sector companies.

The TRC aims at expanding these services by providing new ventures to grant more people the opportunity to invest in the telecommunications sector, the statement said.

It added that in addition to the existing paging company, the Jordan Radio Paging (JRP), the TRC will issue a tender for a new paging service, which is expected to introduce "welcome competition into the market."

The TRC will also offer a tender for a second cellular operator in 1998, the statement said.

The statement added that in addition to its services, the TRC will also regulate the services and prices of all telecommunications network operators and service providers as well as monitor their compliance with license conditions.

The TRC is also responsible

for regulating services, prices and licenses of the Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) which is a government run corporation, according to Yousef Abu Jamous, director general of TRC.

TRC is also in charge of the allocation of frequencies in Jordan as well as resolving interconnection disputes among consumers, operators and service providers, the statement said.

As for the call-back service, which gave the consumer access to international phone rates, the statement said that the government has decided to prohibit the promotion and use of this service in order to protect investors in the telecommunications field.

The call-back service is banned under article 74 of the new telecommunications law, which provides for imposing fines of up to JD 1000, or three-month imprisonment on violators of the law, said the statement.

It added that the government has also banned the importation of used or reconditioned terminal equipment.

Seminar on women ends

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Jordan Environment Society (JES) and the Friedrich Nauman Foundation (FNF) Wednesday concluded a two-day seminar entitled "The Beijing Women Conference and its Repercussion on Jordan."

The seminar, which was attended by prominent representatives of Jordanian women tackled certain women issues related to the Beijing conference. It aimed at promoting women's role and enhancing their participation in attaining sustainable development and increasing women's productivity.

FNF representative Walter Rudel addressed the final session of the seminar, saying that the Beijing's Platform for Action was a good document for promoting women's status but, he said "regrettably gender inequality will not end if the struggle for women's liberation and equality in all sectors of life is not organized and continued with increased power all over the world."

"Beijing certainly was a success in numbers: 185 countries were represented. 5000 meetings were conducted and 40,000 women assembled to discuss the 150 pages of the platform draft," added Mr. Rudel.

But he said that 50 nations have reservations about parts of the platform.

Samira Khawaldeh, dean of the Princess Alia College, addressed the audience at the Regency Hotel, outlining the main topics discussed at Beijing.

The meeting Tuesday and Wednesday was one of a series of seminars conducted at the national level to promote awareness, particularly among women to achieve sustainable development.

It was attended by women organisations, non governmental organisations, academic institutions, political parties and professional associations.

Queen attends workshop on education of gifted, meets with Ambassador Foundation officials

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Wednesday attended the closing session of Jordan's first Regional Workshop on Gifted and Talented Education organised by the Jubilee School in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), a Royal Court statement said.

The four-day workshop, which was conducted by specialists in gifted education from Jordan, Syria, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), England and the United States, hosted more than 120 participants from Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Tunis and Jordan.

The workshop comprised diverse interactive sessions whose topics ranged from computer learning for talented students and programme development for teachers, to the emotional aspects and counseling needs of the gifted.

It also featured a teleconference between two American experts in the United States and the participants, as well as a symposium on Arab programmes for gifted and talented education.

In his speech, Jubilee School Principal Faith Jarwan announced the establishment of the Arab Council for the Gifted and Talented, whose honorary

president will be Queen Noor, the statement said.

The council, which was founded by the representatives of the 9 participating Arab countries, will be located in Amman.

Also, according to the statement, Khalifah Suweidi of the UAE stressed the importance of investing in education and ensuring the employment of the Arab countries' graduates so that the "Arab World can reap the rewards of its educational harvest."

Queen Noor emphasised that attention to this educational sector is important as part of the process of advancing the quality of education for all students in Jordan and in the Arab World by developing programmes that will allow each and every student to fulfill his or her potential, said the statement.

Also Wednesday, a Royal Court statement said, Queen Noor met with Joseph Locke, the vice president of the Ambassador Foundation and Daniel Thompson, the director of the Ambassador Foundation in Jordan and his wife at Al-Mawa Palace.

The Ambassador Foundation, which has been active in Jordan since 1982, is closing down all its international projects due to lack of funding, the statement said.



According to the statement, Mr. Thompson said the foundation's three major projects are in Thailand, Sri Lanka and Jordan, adding that Jordan is "the biggest and longest running and was the first to open and will be the last to close."

During his tenure, Mr. Locke oversaw donations of nearly \$2 million for the country's underprivileged, said the statement.

Queen Noor expressed her appreciation on behalf of His Majesty King Hussein and the people of Jordan for the dedicated and invaluable support of the volunteers, whom the foundation has been sending to work with various non-governmental organisations

such as the Noor Al Hussein Foundation (NHF), the Young Muslim Women's Association, Al Hussein Society and the Jordan Sports Federation for the Handicapped, the statement said.

In the past 13 years, more than 140 volunteers have worked mainly with the underprivileged and the disabled, it said.

The Ambassador Foundation was established in 1975 by the World Wide Church of God in Texas, in the U.S., as its secular arm to promote humanitarian services, the statement said. It has programmes in the Middle East, Africa, North and South American, Europe and Asia.

Body of missing man found near Ma'an

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The body of a man who had been reported missing for four months was found Tuesday by authorities in a valley near Dabab Hanout in Ma'an.

A 25-year-old man was arrested Wednesday in connection with the death, official sources said.

An official source told the Jordan Times Wednesday that the suspect, whom he would not identify, Wednesday confessed that he accidentally shot Bakhit Saleh while they were hunting.

The source, who preferred anonymity, said the suspect told police that he went hunting with the victim in the valley where he slid and a bullet was accidentally shot from his rifle striking Mr. Saleh in the head.

"The suspect told police that the reason he did not inform the authorities is that he was afraid of vengeance," the source said.

According to the source, Mr. Saleh, 25, was reported missing by his family four months ago. His deteriorating body was discovered Tuesday by a shepherd in the valley of Dabab Hanout, the source added.

Preliminary investigations indicated that Mr. Saleh had received one bullet to the head, said the source.

"The victim's body was decomposed and forensic examination indicated that there was a hole in the skull caused by a gun shot wound," the source said.

Police sources confirmed the incident but refused to release any details, saying they were investigating the incident.

Theft suspects detained

Meanwhile, Irbid police Wednesday announced the arrest of four suspects, including a woman, involved in several thefts in the Irbid area.

Lieutenant Colonel Mohammad Rashid, director of the Irbid Criminal Investigation Department, said the authorities apprehended three men who allegedly robbed eight houses, six mosques and stole two cars in the south suburbs of Irbid.

He told the Jordan Times that all burglaries occurred during the month of December.

He identified the men as Adnan Mohammad Hafez, 35, Ashraf Kamal and Ahmad Mohammad Ahmad both aged 19. He said they all had previous criminal records and were unemployed.

The police official said that last week Irbid police arrested a woman who they described as a specialist in stealing handbags during weddings.

"The woman would attend the wedding pretending to be a guest and while people are busy she would sneak out with the handbags," Col. Rashid said.

According to the official, police were able to identify the woman after reviewing a video tape where both families could not identify the woman as one of their guests.

According to police, the woman, 45, confessed to stealing at least 22 handbags containing jewellery, money and perfumes.

Col. Rashid called on the women who lost their handbags during weddings to claim them at the Irbid police department.

More rain, snow expected with sharp drop in temperatures

AMMAN (J.T.) — Heavy rains are expected for 48 hours starting Thursday, with snow falling in areas above 3,000 metres above sea level, the Department of Meteorology said Wednesday.

A department spokesman told the Jordan Times that now could fall in Sweileh, Abu Nuseir and Jubeiha areas in the Amman region. Ajloun in the north of the country and Sharrah mountains in the south are also expected to receive snow.

The spokesman said that a cold depression centred over Cyprus is affecting all the eastern Mediterranean region, causing high winds and rain and a sharp drop in temperatures. He said that temperatures in the Amman region are expected to drop to two degrees centigrade at night and rise to a maximum of five degrees in the day.

Witness says murder victim had threatened suspect

By Rana Hussein
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A prosecution witness in the case of Kayed Ahmad, accused of murdering Mahmoud Ensour in Salt last August, told the court Wednesday that Mr. Ensour had threatened Mr. Kayed several times with informing the authorities that he had defrauded him.

Kayed Ahmad, who pleaded innocent, is charged with robbing and murdering Mohammad Ensour on Aug. 14 over a money feud. Mr. Ensour's body was found cut up and discarded in three separate garbage bags in the area around Salt one week after he was reported missing.

Ibrahim Ali Najjar, 29, a close friend of the victim, told the court that he was present when Mr. Ensour argued and threatened Kayed to inform the prosecutor general that he was defrauded "if Kayed did not come up with the taxi licence he had promised him."

He added that the day before the murder, Mr. Ensour saw Kayed in Al Midan Street in Salt and asked him again for the taxi licence. "He was really upset," he said.

Mr. Najjar told the court he had learned from Mr. Ensour, a month before the incident, that Kayed was helping him purchase a taxi licence and that he had paid him a cheque of JD 1,500 as downpayment.

He also told the court he met with Mr. Ensour's

brothers the day after the murder and they asked him about their brother's whereabouts.

"We all went to Kayed's shop and when he saw me he became nervous and was shaking," he said.

"Kayed told us that he did not see Mahmoud since Sunday (the day before the murder) and he offered to go with his brothers to search for Mahmoud and to inform the police that Mahmoud was missing," Mr. Najjar added.

Also testifying in the case was Hamdan Awishe, 19, who told the court that Kayed bought a two-metre electric rope from his shop in Al Midan Street in Salt the day of the incident.

In his confession, according to court documents, Kayed, who was helping Mahmoud purchase a taxi licence, told police he killed Mr. Ensour because he had defrauded him of JD 1,700 and he wanted to get rid of him because he kept asking for his money.

On Aug. 14, court documents said, Kayed asked the victim to meet him at his house to finish the necessary papers. There, Kayed allegedly strangled Mr. Ensour with an electric rope, stole JD 2,000 he had on him and some documents.

The court, presided by Judge Abdul Ruhman Tawfiq and Judges Isma'el Hmouz and Mifteh Mubaidin, set Jan. 30 as the date for resuming the trial.

Defence produces new information in alleged sabotage case

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — A witness for the defence in the case of six people known as the Islamic Revivalists, accused of sabotage, Wednesday gave testimony contradicting the one given by a prosecution witness on Dec. 16 concerning the area where explosives allegedly belonging to the group was found.

Marzouq Batayneh, a dignitary in the village where the defendants live and who accompanied officials and explosive experts to inspect the cave where the explosives had been allegedly hidden, told the tribunal that the explosives were buried in a cave 400 metres away from defendant Khalid Kilani's house.

On Dec. 16, one of the prosecution witnesses, Captain Ahmad Kurdi of the Irbid police department, told the court that he had searched the home of Khalid Kilani and found no explosives; instead the defendant led him to a cave two metres away from his house where the explosive materials were buried.

When state prosecutor Major Mahmoud Obeidat

presented the explosives, allegedly found in the cave, for Mr. Batayneh to identify, the witness positively identified the explosives.

The group of six, which is alleged to have started gathering its members in 1990, is charged with planning to carry out attacks against foreigners in Jordan, using explosives and automatic weapons. The group was apprehended before it actually carried out any attack.

The defendants are also charged with illegal possession and manufacturing of explosive materials and automatic weapons for illicit use, and belonging to an illegal organisation.

Khalid Aref, defending Mr. Kilani, asked the court to dismiss explosives expert Ahmad Ali because, Mr. Aref said, his testimony is no longer necessary.

The witness should be dismissed because "his testimony will be similar to Mr. Batayneh's," Mr. Aref said.

Major Obeidat asked the court to allow him time to prepare his final argument.

Presiding Judge Colonel Hafez Amin agreed to the defence and prosecutor's requests and set Jan. 23 as the date to resume the case.

Minister says Wadi Araba will witness growing development

AQABA (Petra) — The Wadi Araba region in southern Jordan will witness a comprehensive development process in the coming decade, Minister of Water and Irrigation Saleh Irsheidat said Wednesday.

At a meeting with residents of Al Risha town in Wadi Araba, Dr. Irsheidat said his ministry gives due concern to developing the region with the aim of improving living conditions.

Paying tribute to His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan's keen interest in developing the region, Dr. Irsheidat said several dam projects will be carried out in the region this year, including Al Ghidhan Valley dam, which

have a capacity of 8 million cubic metres.

The minister said a local consultative firm is currently conducting a feasibility study on building two dams in Wadi Musa and Wadi Rahma, noting that the study will be complete in the first quarter of this year.

Dr. Irsheidat said that there is another project to exploit underground water in Al Risha area and added that the project is financed through grants by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Islamic Development Bank. The fund is offering 300,000 Kuwaiti dinars and the bank is offering \$280,000.

CORRECTION

IN AN article published in the Jordan Times on Wednesday, Jan. 17 (Queen Noor announces 5 scholarships for Jordanian students to United World Colleges) students were advised to obtain their application forms from the Ministry of Education and the Abdul Hamid Shoman Foundation. Applications should in fact be obtained from the Ministry of Education and the Abdul Hamid Sharaf School. We apologise for any confusion this may have caused the readers.

FILMS

* "The Client" at the American Centre on Thursday at 10:00 p.m.
* "Juncal" (pt V, VI, and VII) at Instituto Cervantes, alal Amman on Thursday at 5:00 p.m.

CONCERTS

* "Echoes of Arab Music" (involving oud and jawza) on Thursday at Kan Zaman at 8:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Graphic works by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Jorai Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh (until Feb. 18).

* Contemporary and Traditional Jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, Shmeisani (Tel. 699141) (until Jan. 31).

* Water colours by Salam Kanaan at Riwaq Al Balqa gallery, Fuheis (until Jan. 20).

* Paintings by Iraqi artist Hareth Muthanna entitled "Women and Horses" at the Royal Cultural Centre (until Jan. 18).

* Water colours by several German artists at Goethe-Institut (until Jan. 21).

* Plastic (abstract) art exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina (until Feb. 6).

* Paintings by artist Raphael Chahrol at the French Cultural Centre (until Jan. 31).

China demands recall of U.S., Japanese diplomats for spying

BEIJING (AFP) — China confirmed Wednesday it had demanded the U.S. and Japanese governments recall two diplomats from their respective embassies here, accusing them of spying on two restricted Chinese military zones.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Shen Gnofang said Japan's Air Self-Defense Force Colonel Kenji Maetani and U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Bradley Gerdes "illegally entered ... into Chinese restricted military zones ... and their illegal obtaining of military intelligence are clear in the facts," Xinhua said.

"The irrefutable evidence shows that their actions were deliberate and premeditated," said Mr. Shen, accusing the pair of "conducting activities entirely incompatible with their status as diplomats" — a euphemism for spying.

"They have seriously encroached upon China's sovereignty and compromised the national security of China," he said, adding the Foreign Ministry had summoned U.S. and Japanese officials here to express its "strong displeasure" and demand the diplomats be recalled before Friday.

Col. Maetani and Col. Gerdes were intercepted on Jan. 8 as they were entering into restricted military zones in the southern island province of Hainan, where they were "photographing and videotaping," Mr. Shen was quoted as saying.

But, despite accepting the confiscation of their films and videotapes and signing a written confession about their activities, they subsequently, "showing no repentance, again sneaked into a military airport near Zhanjiang City" in southern Guangdong province Thursday, he said.

They were "caught on the spot" gathering intelligence and were interrogated by the competent Chinese authorities, the spokesman said.

During the interrogation they "confessed their guilt in illegally entering into the Chinese restricted military zones, admitted in writing their wrongdoings and pledged not to repeat such activities in the future," he said.

Zhanjiang is the base for the Chinese Navy's South China Sea Fleet.

Japanese and U.S. officials have denied any wrongdoing by their diplomats.

U.S. State Department

spokesman Nicholas Burns said Tuesday the U.S. charge d'affaires in Beijing had "protested vigorously" against the arrest of Col. Gerdes, who returned to the U.S. embassy Saturday.

The officer's tour of the region was approved by Chinese authorities and was "fully consistent with his diplomatic status," he said.

The visit was "routine official business ... part of his normal course of operation," Mr. Burns said, adding that Col. Gerdes had not been mistreated but was interrogated for 19 hours without being allowed to sleep.

A Japanese Foreign Ministry official said the embassy here had lodged a protest with the Chinese Foreign Ministry, accusing China of violating the Vienna Convention governing diplomatic status.

Col. Maetani "unintentionally" entered the restricted area in Guangdong, he said.

The attaché was detained from Thursday to Friday and had been asked to leave the country on a "voluntary" basis, he added.

A Defence Agency spokesman said the incident was the first of its type since 1987, when a Japanese military attaché was expelled

from the Soviet Union.

A similar incident between China and the United States occurred in August, when bilateral ties were strained as differences mounted over Taiwan.

On that occasion, two U.S. military personnel based in Hong Kong were arrested during a trip to southern China. They were expelled for allegedly taking photographs of Chinese military installations.

Relations between Washington and Beijing are still recovering from a dramatic downturn following the U.S. granting of a visa to Lee Teng-Hui, the president of Taiwan, which Beijing insists is part of China.

Mr. Shen said the activities of Col. Maetani and Col. Gerdes had broken China's laws on state security, protection of military facilities and the control of entry and exit of aliens, as well as violating the Vienna Convention on diplomatic ties.

The Chinese authorities "demanded the U.S. government and the Japanese government to strictly abide by the basic norms governing international relations and guarantee against the recurrence of similar incidents in the future," he said.



Shuttle Endeavour astronauts Leroy Chiao (top) and Winston Scott work in the cargo bay of the shuttle during the second spacewalk of the mission. Winston holds a device which measures temperature variances in the cargo bay. Chiao is attaching tools to the aft bulkhead area of the shuttle bay for future experiments (Reuters photo)

Shuttle crew wrap up 2nd spacewalk

HOUSTON SPACE CENTER, Texas (AFP) — Two astronauts aboard the U.S. space shuttle Endeavour completed the second spacewalk of their nine-day mission Wednesday, NASA said.

It was astronaut's Leroy Chiao's second time outside the Endeavour after Monday's spacewalk, but on this occasion he was joined by Winston Scott.

The two astronauts began their six-hour space jaunt at 12:40 a.m. (0540 GMT), an hour later than programmed due to some difficulties in suiting up, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) said.

As with the first spacewalk, the astronauts tested tools and techniques to be used in building a future international space station. They took with them a special tool box designed to hold avionics equipment and tested a new tether to keep space workers from drifting away as they move about outside the future space station.

NASA scientists monitored the astronauts' every move to determine the most

efficient movement and work environment that can be achieved in a state of weightlessness.

Chiao and Scott also tested space suits and thermal underwear that NASA hopes will keep astronauts warmer in the bone-chilling cold of space.

After the spacewalk, NASA was to decide whether ice buildup in one of the Endeavour's two cooling systems may warrant shortening the space mission by one day.

NASA said they have several options to dislodge the ice, including pointing the cooling system towards the sun.

The problem, already encountered in past shuttle missions, posed no risk to the crew and is not considered serious, since the Endeavour's primary cooling system was functioning properly, a spokesman said.

The Endeavour was launched Thursday from Cape Canaveral, Florida, and is programmed for a landing at the same site Saturday.

Boy wins settlement for panda bite

BEIJING (R) — A boy bitten and disabled by a giant panda at his local zoo was awarded a cash settlement by an east China court, Xinhua News Agency said Wednesday. Lu Jie, whose age was not given, was attacked by the panda in February 1995 in the Huzhou People's Zoo in Zhejiang province, the official agency reported. Lu had climbed into the panda's cage with two playmates to play with the cuddly-looking endangered national symbol, which inflicted a crippling bite to his left leg, it said. The Huzhou Court held the zookeeper and the boy's parents responsible for the incident. Lu's mother nonetheless sued the zoo for negligence and sought 96,000 yuan (\$11,540) in compensation. The court awarded him 37,118 yuan (\$4,470), Xinhua said.

Chinese women spurned by civil service

BEIJING (AFP) — An official Chinese newspaper has accused the country's civil service of blatant sexual discrimination, citing a recent job fair at which two-thirds of state organizations openly expressed a bias against women applicants. Of the 42 organizations under the state council that were represented at the fair held in Beijing last week, 27 either imposed a limit on the number of women to be recruited or rejected them completely, the China Women's News said in its latest edition. The newspaper said the attitude of the organizations was all the more appalling considering that 1996 marks the first year of the Chinese women's development programme — a state-drafted blueprint for ensuring women's rights across the country. A section chief from one state department told the newspaper that women were often turned away for three reasons: They do not like to travel, they cannot carry a heavy workload and they want to have children. "This way of thinking shows that women's liberation has a long way to travel from theory to reality," the newspaper said. Beijing hosted the World Conference on Women in September — an irony not lost on one disgruntled female graduate who found herself spurned at the job fair. "The conference only just closed and yet already we're being confronted with discrimination like this in state organizations. I can't believe it," said Zhou Xianglin, a graduate from Hunan Financial Institute.

Showgirls heads list of most boring movies

LOS ANGELES (R) — Never mind the Oscars and Golden Globes, the list of 1995's most boring movies is in and Showgirls has been given a special category of its own. The critically derided box office flop about a scheming Las Vegas stripper is the sole nominee for "most boring sex film" in the Boring Institute's 11th annual list of celluloid under-achievers. "This film, filled with gorgeous naked women, was spoiled by a totally unnecessary plot and dialogue," said the institute's citation. The erotic movie, written by Basic Instinct screenwriter Joe Eszterhas and starring Elizabeth Berkley, grossed about \$20 million at the domestic box office. Audiences may struggle to recall some of the nominees for most boring drama/action film: The Tie That Binds, Magic In The Water, Bad Company, Rangoon and Jefferson In Paris. Their bigger rivals are Waterworld, Judge Dredd, Wild Bill, Congo and Under Siege 2: Dark Territory. Last year's winner was On Deadly Ground which, along with the Under Siege sequel, starred Steven Seagal.

North Korean diplomat's wife says she fled embassy problems

SEOUL (AFP) — A North Korean diplomat's wife who defected from Zambia said here Wednesday that life in the prison-like mission compound had become so intolerable she had tried to commit suicide, and when that failed she fled.

"I wanted to die," the defector, 36-year-old Choi Soo-Bong, was quoted as saying in her first statement released by intelligence authorities.

"I was manhandled by the ambassador and there were serious disputes among the staff in the compound."

Mrs. Choi, wife of the North Korean third secretary in Lusaka and the daughter of an elite official in the North, said she was relegated to the job of embassy typist and even forced to clean the compound.

Yonhap News Agency in a separate statement, attributed to unnamed officials here, said Mrs. Choi had told her questioners that her husband had tried, but failed to flee to the British embassy.

Yonhap also said a second defector from Zambia, until now identified only as a mysterious martial arts instructor named Cha Song-Ku, was a highly-trained espionage agent. It quoted an unnamed senior official as saying he was "probably a bigger catch" than Mrs. Choi.

Mr. Cha's father is Cha Sun-Kwon, deputy minister in charge of protocol in North Korea's Foreign Ministry, and one of his uncles a four-star general in the North Korean army, the official told Yonhap.

Neither Yonhap report was confirmed or denied by the Foreign Ministry here.

The pair arrived in Seoul in separate planes from London Tuesday.

In the released statement, Mrs. Choi painted a picture of hot-house desperation and petty brutishness in the embassy, with the families of junior staff members calling the ambassador's wife "crocodile."

She tried to commit suicide by taking an overdose of sleeping tablets "because of the

inhumane treatment by the North Korean, Ambassador Kim Ung-Sang" one day before the defection, the statement said.

"After waking up in the morning, (realising) my suicide attempt a failure, I decided to defect ... and ran immediately to the South Korean embassy," she said.

"Also I have been disillusioned with North Korea's political system. Life in the compound was desperate," Mrs. Choi said.

A graduate in literature from the North's elite Kim Il-Sung University, and the daughter of Choi Hui-Su, 69, a prestigious member of the North's Academy of Sciences, she rebelled when the ambassador forced her to clean the embassy compound in addition to her typing duties.

The ambassador slapped her in the face, her husband scolded her and life became more and more miserable, she said, with the "crocodile" interfering in every detail of the lives of the staff and their dependants.

Discontented younger embassy officials had talked secretly among themselves about South Korea, she said.

In November she said she refused to write the ambassador's new year message to Kim Jong-Il, and when the ambassador did it himself, he was reprimanded by Pyongyang for bad writing.

No transcript has yet been released from the interrogation of Mr. Cha, who defected five days after Mrs. Choi amid fears his real job was to liquidate Mrs. Choi before she could reach Seoul.

He decided to defect to the South after being given an "impossible" order sent directly from North Korea to recruit a South Korean diplomat, and because, as chief agent in Zambia, he feared punishment for Mrs. Choi's defection, he said.

During their interrogations, it was confirmed Mrs. Choi and Mr. Cha had no extramarital relationship, Yonhap added.

Australian state accused of stealthy republicanism

CANBERRA (R) — Australia's smouldering debate over Prime Minister Paul Keating's plan for a republic by the year 2001 hurt back to life on Wednesday as monarchists accused one state of trying to impose a republic by stealth.

One of Keating's colleagues, New South Wales Labour Premier Bob Carr, sparked the latest flare-up Tuesday when he announced he would strip the state governor of many privileges and make the job a part-time one.

Each of Australia's six states has a governor who represents Britain's Queen Elizabeth, who is Australia's head of state.

"It's outrageous and despicable," said Kerry Jones, the spokeswoman for Australia's main monarchist group, the Constitutional Monarchy.

"It's republicanism by stealth because there's no mandate from the people — there's no referendum," Mr. Jones told Reuters.

Mr. Keating hopes he can convince Australians to vote in a referendum before the year 2000 to remove Queen Elizabeth as head of state and create a republic.

But Mr. Carr went ahead Tuesday as he appointed a new governor and announced a downgrading of the cost and activities of the queen's representative in the state.

"The advance towards the Australian republic makes such a review timely," Mr. Carr said in a statement announcing the changes.

The new governor, former Judge Gordon Samuels, will work only part-time as governor and have to live in his own home.

His predecessor, Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, lived in luxurious official residences complete with butlers, maids, drivers, cooks and kitchen hands.

Judge Samuels will only have a driver and a private secretary.

"In its day-to-day conduct, the office of governor should be less associated with pomp and ceremony, less encumbered by anachronistic protocol, more in tune with the character of the people," Mr. Carr said.

Since Australia's formation over 200 years ago as a British colony, Australia's state governors have usually acted in a ceremonial role.

CIA chief, in Colombia, pledges help in nabbing fugitive drug lord

BOGOTA (AFP) — U.S. CIA Director John Deutch personally monitored Colombia's manhunt for a fugitive Cali cartel druglord during a visit here, and pledged U.S. assistance in tracking him down, officials said Tuesday.

Mr. Deutch's rare, top-level U.S. presence in Colombia had been scheduled since last November, but his visit coincided precisely with a development the United States has grumbled was evidence Colombia needed to take a tougher line in the war on drugs.

The director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) met with President Ernesto Samper, Defense Minister Juan Carlos Espartero, Justice Minister Carlos Medellín and Foreign Minister Rodrigo Pardo and Attorney General Alfonso Valdivieso.

Mr. Deutch was accompanied by Assistant Secretary of Defence John Sheridan and officials of the U.S.

Drug Enforcement Administration.

Mr. Espartero said the two sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in fighting drug trafficking. The defence minister said Colombia asked for U.S. technical and logistical aid.

Jose Santacruz Londono, reputedly the third-in-command of the powerful Cali drug ring blamed for moving the majority of the cocaine consumed in the United States, escaped from a maximum-security prison Thursday behind the smoked glass of a car visiting the jail.

In Cali, Mr. Deutch looked in on the manhunt as part of a 24-hour visit. He arrived in the early hours of Monday and left early Tuesday.

Police sources said Mr. Deutch was impressed with the Colombian authorities plans, and that he immediately offered U.S. high-tech help in nabbing Mr. Santacruz.

Meanwhile, a fax purport-

edly sent from Caracas by Mr. Santacruz to the Colombian media was circulated widely here, including his national ID number and a supposed fingerprint.

It was not immediately clear if the document was authentic. It said neither Mr. Santacruz's cartel colleagues nor prison guards were involved in his jailbreak, and criticised the government's prosecution of cartel leaders.

It said that while in jail, Mr. Santacruz had not been questioned for alleged drug trafficking or for alleged involvement in the 1989 murder of Antioquia Governor Antonio Roldan. The letter said illicit enrichment charges against Mr. Santacruz were only brought up when he went on the lam.

Mr. Santacruz, 52, known as "the Student," was arrested on July 4 by bodyguards of the national police chief while dining in plain view at a stylish Bogota restaurant.

Photo of galaxies peers back towards big bang

WASHINGTON (R) — A startling image made by the Hubble space telescope of more than 1,500 distant galaxies allows astronomers to peer back in time to within a billion years of the big bang, a NASA scientist said Tuesday.

The new pictures show a dark sky studded with what at first look like twinkling diamonds but are actually the swirling shapes of galaxies in various stages of evolution.

These images provide a world laboratory for researchers who want to track the origins of the universe, according to Ed Weiler, chief scientist for the Hubble space telescope.

"This is an attempt to take a picture that sees as far back (in time) and as faint (an image) as humans have ever seen," Mr. Weiler said in a telephone interview from San Antonio, where the images were released Monday at a meeting of the American Astronomical Society.

Astronomers made the images by focusing the orbiting Hubble spacecraft at an apparently "empty" spot in the heavens just above the handle of the big dipper constellation. They chose this location so that no close-by stars from Earth's Milky Way galaxy would get in the picture.

Because some of the galaxies were so faint and so far away — between 10 billion and 13 billion light-years, with a light-year equalling about 6 trillion miles — the images could only be made by pushing Hubble to the edge of its capabilities, Mr. Weiler said.

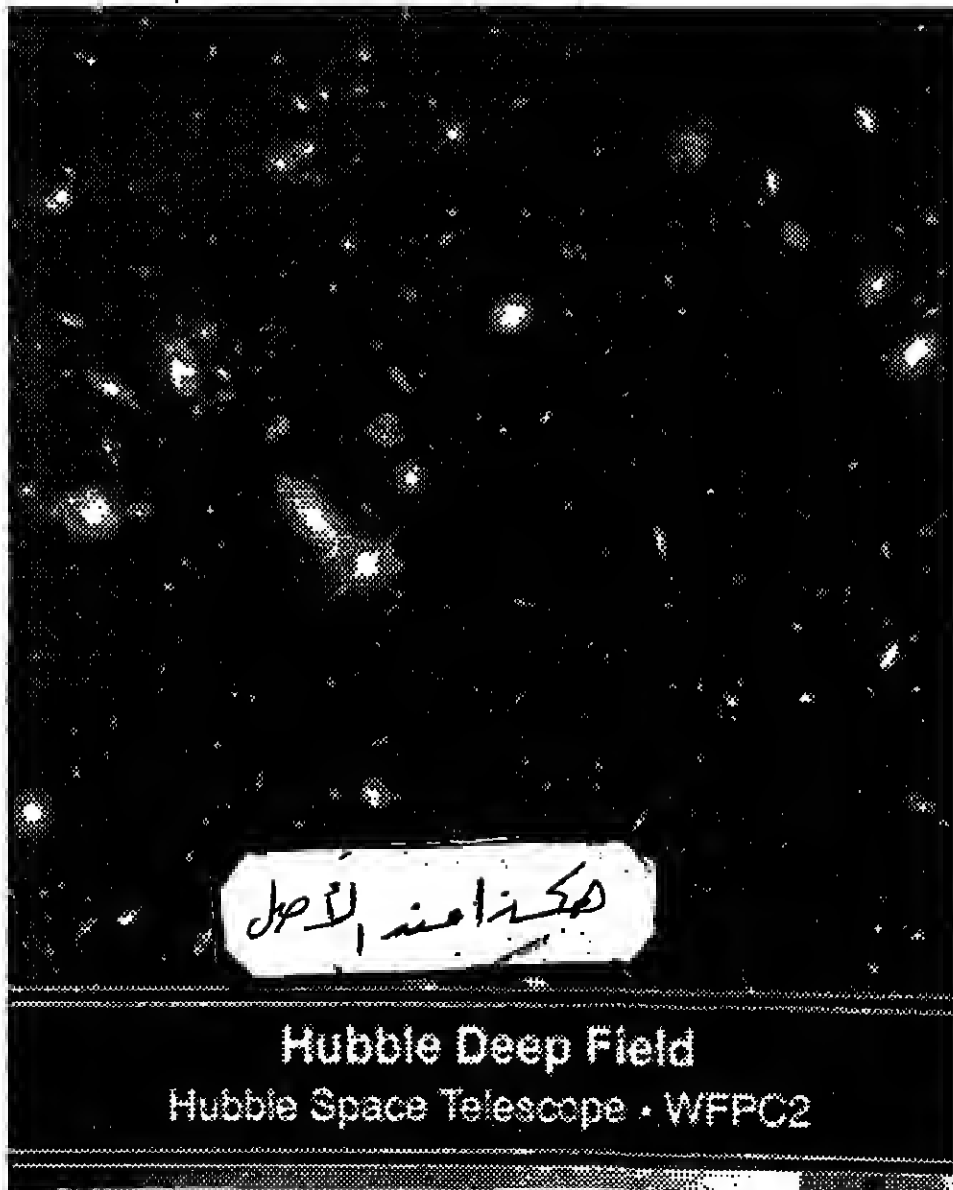
"We pushed the telescope almost to its limits," he said. "One picture represents between 30 and 80 hours of work."

"We reached four billion times fainter than the human eye can see," Mr. Weiler said. "You're seeing back to probably within a billion years after the big bang."

The big bang theory holds that the universe was created in a powerful explosion that dispersed matter outward, and the dispersal is continuing. The timing of this explosion is a matter for scientific debate, but it may have occurred some 10 billion to 15 billion years ago. Celestial bodies born soon after the big bang are farthest away and their light has taken billions of years to reach Earth. By capturing the images of these distant galaxies, scientists may be able to see how galaxies and their components evolve.

In another finding presented to the astronomical meeting, Hubble scientists showed an image of the star Betelgeuse that revealed a massive "hot spot".

Mr. Weiler said this is the first picture of a star, other than the sun, ever taken that shows distinct features. All previous pictures of stars have shown them merely as points of light, he said.



Several hundred never before seen galaxies are visible in this image taken by the Hubble space telescope and released by NASA. The images allow astronomers to peer back in time to within a billion years of the Big Bang, according to NASA. The image was assembled from many separate exposures taken with the Wide Field and Planetary Camera for ten consecutive days, December 18 to 28, 1995 (Reuters photo)

Berlusconi goes on trial for corruption

MILAN (R) — Italy's former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi went on trial in a blaze of publicity Wednesday, accused of corruption on charges linked to his multi-billion dollar Fininvest business empire.

The conservative media magnate, 59, his brother Paolo and nine others including business associates and former finance police could face up to five years in prison if found guilty.

All deny charges brought by Milan's elite team of "clean hands" anti-graft magistrates that four Fininvest companies paid bribes totalling 380 million lire (\$240,000) to tax inspectors in return for lenient audits between 1989 and 1991.

Mr. Berlusconi, who spent seven stormy months in office in 1994, became Italy's first serving prime minister to face criminal charges when investigators launched their case against him in November 1994. He has branded the affair a political witch hunt.

Only he and three co-defendants, all former finance policemen, were present in the marble-panelled courtroom for the opening of the trial. The other accused, including Paolo Berlusconi, exercised their right not to attend.

The fascist-era court was packed for the hearing, with many journalists following proceedings from behind bars in a security cage built down one side of the room for dangerous prisoners.

Dressed in a grey suit and pale blue shirt, Mr. Berlusconi was driven into the court building through a side entrance past waiting reporters and armed carabinieri paramilitary police.

Smiling and looking relaxed, he shook hands with a political ally, Parliamentarian Vittorio Sgarbi, before sitting down at the front of the court with his lawyers.

Initial proceedings were taken up with debate on whether television cameras should be allowed to film the trial and whether coverage should be live.

Mr. Berlusconi, who swept to a general election victory in March 1994 just weeks after entering politics, insists the payments at the root of the trial were extorted by rapacious tax police and that he had no knowledge of them at the time they were made.

At an eve-of-trial news conference, he launched his most violent attack yet on the Milan magistrates, accusing them of using investigations to try to bring down his government and take power in Italy themselves.

He reserved his most stinging criticisms for former star Magistrate Antonio Di Pietro, the man who symbolised the judicial assault which toppled Italy's corrupt old political guard.

"I accuse the investigating magistrates who built up the prosecution, and in particular Di Pietro, of having used their powers in the administration of justice to obtain the resignation of the government presided over by myself," Mr. Berlusconi said in a statement issued after the news conference.

His allegations were dismissed as laughable by Milan's Chief Prosecutor Francesco Saverio Borrelli.

"Frankly, it seems to me that looking at the history of the crisis in his government, the right honourable Berlusconi's affirmation is totally ridiculous," Mr. Borrelli said.

Mr. Berlusconi heads the centre-right Freedom Alliance coalition of parties in parliament, but his prospects of returning to high office have taken a knock as a result of his judicial woes.

He has recently dropped insistent calls for a snap general election to join other parties in the search for a broad-based government to succeed the government of technocrat Prime Minister Lamberto Dini, who resigned last week.

Senate panel examines Whitewater meeting notes

WASHINGTON (R) — Senate investigators Tuesday examined parts of cryptic notes made of a 1993 meeting on the Whitewater affair that had earlier threatened to lead to a constitutional confrontation with the president.

The notes of the Nov. 5 meeting between White House lawyers and President and Mrs. Clinton's own attorneys were surrendered to the Senate Whitewater Committee only after it had moved to seek court enforcement of its subpoena for them.

The legal battle had appeared to be headed all the way to the Supreme Court, raising comparisons with Watergate. But committee questioning of the author of the notes, former White House associate counsel William Kennedy, along with former associate counsel Neil Eggleston and current deputy White House counsel Bruce Lindsay appeared to yield little new, other than an explanation of the use of the word "vacuum."

Earlier release of the notes had brought suggestions that the entry "vacuum" Rose Law files referred to a plan to comb through the files of the Rose Law Firm in Little Rock, Arkansas, where Hillary Rodham Clinton was formerly a partner.

But Mr. Kennedy told the committee the word referred to a "vacuum of information" because real estate files relating to the Clintons' investment in an Arkansas vacation development known as Whitewater "were in a shambles," both Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Eggleston said there was "absolutely" no discussion at the meeting of destroying any files.

The Nov. 5 meeting at the offices of the Clintons' lawyers, Mr. Eggleston said, was to advise the

Clinton's attorneys of the facts and to ensure that the private lawyers and White House lawyers each performed their proper roles.

The meeting occurred as Whitewater news stories swirled around the Clintons' failed investment in which they were partners with the head of the Madison Guaranty Savings and Loan Association, James McDougal, and his wife. Investigators are trying to find out whether any government-insured depositors' money in the failing savings and loan was funnelled into the Whitewater investment.

Mrs. Clinton's role has received intense scrutiny recently after the unexpected discovery at the White House of billing records for legal work that she did for Madison while she was a Rose partner. The committee is examining those records.

Discovery of the billing records followed earlier release of a memo that appeared to suggest the first lady played a role in the firing of White House travel office staffers, an incident that has become known as "travelgate."

Mrs. Clinton has denied such a role in a series of recent TV and radio interviews about Whitewater, travelgate and her new book for children, *It Takes A Village*.

In Little Rock Tuesday, she was greeted by more than a thousand cheering people as she arrived on a book promotion visit. "I have a message I want to try to get out despite all the storm about Whitewater," she said.

A House of Representatives Committee was expected to hear testimony from the author of the travelgate memo, former White House aide David Watkins, Wednesday.



Drug lord Juan Garcia Abrego, 51, is escorted out of the Federal Court building in Houston by FBI agents. Mr. Abrego, who is on the FBI's "Ten Most Wanted Fugitives" list, was arrested on Jan. 14 in Monterrey, Mexico. Mr. Abrego agreed to stay in jail without bond until a Feb. 6 hearing (Reuter photo)

Drug lord's expulsion stirs controversy in Mexico

MEXICO CITY (AFP) — Mexico justified its speedy expulsion to the United States of drug lord Juan Garcia Abrego, as the media demanded to know why he was not first tried for the many crimes he allegedly committed here.

The reputed head of the violent Gulf cartel based in northern Mexico and one of the 10 most wanted men in the United States was arrested by Mexican police Sunday in Monterrey and put on a flight to Texas the following day.

Mr. Garcia Abrego, who is reported to have both U.S. and Mexican citizenship, appeared Tuesday before a U.S. court in Houston where he agreed to waive a bail hearing until early next month. He faces 20 charges of drug trafficking, money laundering and operating a criminal enterprise.

U.S. authorities hold the Gulf cartel responsible for nearly one-third of the cocaine shipped into the United States.

The Mexican government's decision to immediately expel Mr. Garcia Abrego drew sharp media criticism Tuesday, with some newspapers reporting that the cocaine kingpin is charged with more than 100 crimes in Mexico.

The usually pro-government El Excelsior said: "Why not try here an evildoer whose crimes were committed on national territory? Once his sentence has been served, then he can be deported."

In dispute is the government's claim that Mr. Garcia Abrego, 51, was not a Mexican citizen and therefore could be expelled on grounds that his presence here was "inconvenient."

On Monday, the Interior Ministry distributed an illegible photocopy of a birth certificate, claiming it showed Mr. Garcia Abrego was born in Las Palomas, Texas, on Sept. 13, 1944.

But Esteban Alvarado, a civil registry official, went on television Tuesday with what he said was Mr. Garcia Abrego's birth certificate showing he was born in the town of Rancho La Puerta, in the northern state of Matamoros.

A Foreign Ministry statement late Tuesday said Mr. Garcia Abrego "is not a Mexican" regardless of Mr. Alvarado's claim, because he had lost his Mexican nationality the moment "he opted for U.S. citizenship."

Meanwhile, Mexico's arrest of Mr. Garcia

Abrego drew praise from White House spokesman Michael McCurry who hailed it as "a major coup for Mexican law enforcement officials."

Attorney General Janet Reno said the case "clearly demonstrates that even those who have most successfully eluded capture can be brought to justice by law enforcement entities that act with determination, courage and vigor."

Until his bail hearing set for Feb. 6, Mr. Garcia Abrego will be held at the Harris County Jail in downtown Houston. Security has been beefed up, with television cameras monitoring him 24 hours per day.

A 23-page indictment alleges that Mr. Garcia Abrego's organisation transported and distributed tons of cocaine hidden in compartments of vehicles driven from Mexico to Houston, Dallas and Fort Worth, Texas and New York City.

Mr. Garcia Abrego also allegedly directed that bribes be paid to a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) agent posing as a corrupt agent in exchange for protection and information about investigations, the indictment claimed.

The indictment further alleges that Mr. Garcia Abrego ordered murders and other violent acts.

The indictment, which contains allegations dating back to 1986, details the alleged transport of tons of cocaine and tens of millions of dollars. Mexican press accounts have put Mr. Garcia Abrego's fortune at between \$3 billion and \$15 billion.

If convicted, Mr. Garcia Abrego could face life in prison.

Mexico's Attorney General Antonio Lozano wrote Ms. Reno Tuesday asking that she keep him apprised of Mr. Garcia Abrego's case, his office said in a statement.

Of special interest, the statement added, was any information from the suspect on crimes he may have committed in Mexico and on any Mexicans he may have had illegal dealings with.

Mr. Lozano also asked Ms. Reno to allow a member of his staff to attend any hearings involving Mr. Garcia Abrego.

The attorney general's office also said that it had been notified that Mr. Garcia Abrego had told U.S. authorities that he was born in Las Palomas, Texas, and that both his parents were also U.S. citizens.

Sri Lanka troops poised for major anti-Tiger drive

COLOMBO (AFP) — Sri Lankan security forces were Wednesday poised for a major offensive against jungle bases of Tamil Tiger guerrillas in the east of the country, defence sources here said.

Army commandos were ready to move against positions of the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in the eastern province where there have been stepped up rebel attacks since the New Year, the sources said.

"The monsoon rains have delayed the launch of the onslaught," a defence official said. "But troops will move in any time now on a large front to take on the Tigers."

The chief military spokesman declined to discuss the impending army offensive but said the authorities would "soon take action" against the guerrillas in the eastern regions.

"The situation in the east will be changed very soon," the spokesman said referring to renewed Tiger attacks against security forces and civilians in the eastern districts of Batticaloa, Ampara and Trincomalee.

A gunman from a Tiger hit-squad known as the "pistol group" killed another government official in the town of Trincomalee

Tuesday, bringing to 25 the number of people it has shot dead in the past two months.

More than 50 people have been killed in sporadic violence in the east since the LTTE lost its northern citadel of Jaffna to security forces earlier last month.

The LTTE lost Jaffna, capital of a de facto state run by the Tigers since 1990, after 50 days of bitter fighting with security forces. Some 500 government soldiers and an estimated 2,000 rebels died in the fighting.

More than 50,000 people have died in the separatist struggle in the past 23 years while all political attempts to appease minority Tamils have ended in failure.

Meanwhile Sri Lanka opened talks with political parties in a bid to hammer out a consensus on a new constitution aimed at ending the country's protracted ethnic war, a senior minister said Wednesday.

Justice and Constitutional Affairs Minister G. L. Peiris said negotiations were aimed at obtaining the mandatory two-thirds majority needed in parliament to implement the sweeping reforms.

Mr. Peiris said he was confident of winning support for the reforms which envisage greater devolution of power to minority Tamils with the aim of halting the

Tamil separatist war which has claimed more than 50,000 lives since 1972.

"I am very hopeful of obtaining a consensus. People are sick and tired of this war," Mr. Peiris told reporters here. "The war is necessary but we must take a political decision on what we are going to spend our money."

He said the defence expenditure was estimated at 38 billion rupees (\$716 million) in 1996, up from 32 billion rupees (\$603 million) in 1995.

"I keep telling the people that we are not a poor country," Mr. Peiris said. "We can spend this money on creating jobs for our people."

He said the draft chapter on the new constitution unveiled by him Tuesday sought to lay down the structure of devolution by turning Sri Lanka into a union of regions but the number of regions will be decided by parliament.

"What we have ensured is that devolution takes place subject to the unity and integrity of the sovereign state," Mr. Peiris said. The draft will require a two-thirds majority in parliament and the approval of a nationwide referendum.

The government of President Chandrika Kumaratunga, who initiated the devolution process on

Aug. 3, has only a one seat majority in parliament and needs the support of the main opposition United National Party (UNP).

UNP General Secretary Gamini Athukorala said they were still studying the 29-page draft and needed more time to comment. The government gave copies of the draft to legislators Wednesday, a day after releasing it to the press.

The moderate Tamil United Liberation Front said they were calling a special meeting over the weekend to formulate a position on the devolution package.

The draft proposes special status to Buddhism, the main religion in this majority Sinhalese nation of 17.5 million people.

It is also proposed to set up a "supreme council" of monks to advise the government on preserving Buddhism.

The move is seen as a bid to win the support of the influential Buddhist clergy who had opposed granting greater autonomy to minority Tamils without first militarily defeating separatist Tamil Tiger guerrillas.

The government proposes to grant regional councils authority over land, law and order, taxes and foreign aid subject to pre-determined limits.

Strike paralyses Bangladesh

DHAKA (R) — A day-long general strike called by opposition parties shut down much of Bangladesh Wednesday, despite speculation that a compromise might be struck to end the crippling political crisis.

But the first six hours of the dawn-to-dusk stoppage passed off without major incident, with armed security forces keeping close watch over the few chanting activists on the streets.

"We can call it a total strike...but the strike enforcers appeared somewhat dampened amid speculation of a compromise between the government and opposition," said a leader of a small opposition party.

Witnesses said there was no road transport except rickshaws. Some trains and ferries stopped running while airport officials said flights were delayed.

The strike shut Bangladesh's two sea ports and closed the stock exchanges in Dhaka and Chittagong. Most private offices were closed and few civil servants turned up for work.

Police said a few homemade bombs exploded in Dhaka after the stoppage began at 6 a.m. But no one was hurt.

Main opposition parties, including the Awami League led by Sheikh Hasina, organised the strike to try to thwart the filing of applications by candidates of the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) for the Feb. 15 general election.

Wednesday is officially the last day to register for the election. The opposition has threatened a boycott unless Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia resigns beforehand and hands over power to a neutral successor to supervise the vote.

It accuses Mrs. Khaleda's government of rigging a 1994 by-election and says no poll under her would be fair. She has rejected the opposition charges and demands.

BNP sources said their candidates had already submitted their applications. Opposition parties have called for a "siege" of election offices Thursday when applications will be reviewed.

Thatcher: continued American presence in Asia is a must

TAIPEI (AFP) — Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said Wednesday a continued American presence in Asia is vital regional security.

"In Asia, there are no multilateral defence institutions. Stability will, therefore, depend both on a balance of power between the great countries, and most importantly on a continued American presence," she said in a speech here.

She said "there has to be one global power — a military power of last resort to ensure that regional disputes do not escalate to uncontrollable levels. That power is and can only be the United States."

Lady Thatcher stressed that the American presence in Asia is the "critical ele-

ment in the Asian security equation."

Therefore, she said, America must not be excluded from the benefits of economic cooperation in the region.

For Taiwan to counter military threats from China, Lady Thatcher said it was "necessary" to "keep your own defence strong and up to date," and have a balance of power.

China, a superpower in Asia, has vowed to attack Taiwan should it ever split from the Chinese mainland officially. Beijing has viewed Taiwan as a renegade province since the end of a civil war in 1949 and says the island must eventually reunify with the mainland.

She suggested that China

might introduce democracy after rapid economic development. "With global communications, democracy will follow economic liberty more quickly in the future," she said.

She praised Taiwan's progress in democratic development, saying "the political system here has undergone a remarkable transformation into a British style plural democracy, and by the end of March this democratic process will be completed."

She was referring to the direct, popular presidential elections of March 23 — the first ever to be held in Taiwan.

Lady Thatcher also admired the economic development of Taiwan.

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Jordan Times

An independent Arab political daily published in English by the Jordan Press Foundation
Established 1971
جوردين تايمز يومية عربية مستقلة تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية

Chairman of the Board of Directors:
MAHMOUD AL KAYED

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MOHAMMAD AMAD

Editor-in-Chief:
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Editorial and advertising offices:
Jordan Press Foundation,
University Road, P.O. Box 6710, Amman, Jordan.

Telephones: 684311, 699634

Telex: 21497 ALRAI JO

Facsimile: 696183

The Jordan Times is published daily except Fridays.
Subscription and advertising rates are available from the
Jordan Times advertising department.

Rearticulating Arab political culture

THERE IS no doubt that the nature of issues which the Arab Thought Forum has chosen to address has rendered it an important institution with a great demand to meet in the confused Arab market of politics, economics and intellectualism. But the greatest significance of the forum derives from the model it is trying to set in terms of the methodology of its work and the comprehensiveness of its approach.

Day by day, the forum, under the able chairmanship of His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, is asserting its identity as an independent platform from which complex ideas are addressed in a scientific, emotion-free approach that can only result in sound proposals for dealing with the problems plaguing the Arab political, social, and economic cultures and systems.

But as they proceed in developing their forum, Arab intellectuals should free themselves from ideological positions that could limit their ability to diagnose the ills of the current Arab world and offer the right remedy for them.

What the Arab world needs is a free initiative by its intellectuals to rearticulate the essence of modern Arab political culture in a way that would render it compatible with the values, particularities and necessities of life at the end of the 20th century, when global interconnectedness is the trade mark of the future.

The whole Arab value system needs to be reconsidered. And as that is done, a number of absolutes needs to be emphasised as pillars of the modern Arab culture; pillars that should not be compromised or selectively applied. Respect for human rights, democracy and pluralism should be a concern for all Arabs and all in parts of the Arab World. The degree of emphasis on these principles should not vary to accommodate the interest and concerns of certain groups and their priorities and political or economic weight. The commitment to these principles should be unwavering, universal and genuine.

Arab intellectuals face the enormous burden of rearticulating the Arab political culture as the winds of change continue to blow in the four corners of the globe. This is not an easy task, but nevertheless a task that must be undertaken. The Arab Thought Forum is a promising institution whose members can significantly contribute to the process of defining new features of a new Arab World.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

ALL THAT the Palestinians had achieved through their struggle over the past decades—especially through the intifada and the huge sacrifices they had offered for freedom—could vanish in thin air if the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) proves to the world that it is adopting a police-state style rule, said Fahd Al Fanek in Al Ra'i daily Wednesday. The writer said the Palestinian officials realise that the world's eyes are focused on them monitoring their behaviour especially during the elections while the Israeli media is watching to catch a glimpse of arbitrary rule so that it can relay it to the world. Two incidents in the past months showed the world that the democracy and public freedom to which the PNA had committed itself were abused. He said, citing the arrest of Maher Alami a journalist who failed to publish a report about president Arafat on the front page of his paper and the human rights activist Basem Eid who had protested against the PNA's excesses. The writer warned that any regime that tends to commit arbitrary measures against the journalists and the free press will be self-destructive and will lose its legitimacy and credibility.

Mahmoud Rimawi a writer, in Al Ra'i said that a decision by the United Nations Security Council to send a fact finding mission to Iraq to evaluate its humanitarian situation after five years of international sanctions came late. He said in the past five years the health and living conditions of the Iraqi people have deteriorated to an extent that the majority is facing a real catastrophe. The writer said that the decision which came as a response to a French proposal can do little to help improve the situation unless the Western allies intend to change their position and lift the sanctions.

The View from Academia

Jordan, warm peace and the need to explain

By Dr. Ahmad Y. Majdoubch

THE WARMTH of feelings expressed by both the Israeli public and Israeli officials during His Majesty King Hussein's memorable visit to Israel last Wednesday signifies something that goes well beyond the occasion itself. More specifically, it triggers in the minds of those following the development of the peace process carefully positive thoughts about the concept of "warm" peace—a concept which, despite the heightened press and media interest in it this past week, has not yet received the attention it deserves.

Much can be said about the warm welcome and about what it signifies. First of all, the Israeli warm feelings go way beyond mere formality and sheer political protocol. Secondly, the feelings appear to be genuinely felt, and they thus epitomise a genuine appreciation of peace by a significant portion of the Israeli people. Thirdly, the feelings symbolise a spirit of assertiveness and involvement on part of the Israeli public which we have not seen much of in recent years. Fourthly, peace is in fact working despite the scepticism of the sceptics, the extremism of the extremists and the rejectionism of the rejectionists. Fifthly, the fact that such feelings erupt in connection with a visit made by His Majesty in particular is not a mere coincidence.

From the start, Jordan has sought a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. It may not have been the first to sign a peace treaty with Israel; Egypt and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) have done it first. But it is the first (since the early days of the late King Abdullah) to call for, and work actively towards, the establishment of peace through non-violent means. History will certainly record this bright fact. But, more importantly, history will also record for Jordan the introduction, nourishment and establishment of the concept of warm peace. A careful reading of Jordanian political discourse since the start of the Arab-Israeli conflict reveals that Jordan has not only aimed to avert war, bloodshed and disaster, nor to simply "end" the state of belligerency and conflict between the Arabs and the Israelis, but to create the conditions—political, economic, cultural and psychological—in which a happy and bright future for all the peoples of the region becomes possible. His Majesty's repeated insistence on the establishment of "fair, just, comprehensive and durable peace," on the "future of the generations to come," on the fate of "the children of Abraham," etc. strongly imply Jordan's understanding and commitment have also been made crystal clear in Jordanian words and deeds since Madrid—in the warm spirit which prevailed throughout

the bilateral peace talks, the signing of the Washington Declaration, the ratification of the peace treaty in Wadi Araba, the Amman Middle East and North Africa (MENA) summit, the funeral of the late prime minister Rabin and, most recently, His Majesty's visit to Israel last Wednesday. The warm applause His Majesty received last Wednesday's is meant, the way I understand it, as a small token of recognition of His Majesty's and Jordan's long and firm commitment to the concept of warm peace. The fact that the Israeli officials and public understand and appreciate the Jordanian position is extremely encouraging.

Undoubtedly, there are many in the Arab World and in Jordan who today understand and value the Jordanian position and who have understood and valued it from the start. But there are also some who either do not understand or do not want to understand. As for the latter (those who do not want to understand), we have nothing to say to them here except that time and history will prove them to be mistaken. But to those who do not understand, we (as individuals and society, officials and private citizens) have, I believe, to have something to say to them. Ignorance is a nasty enemy.

To put it more clearly, there are among us those who do not know what warm peace is a concept means. In our informal gatherings, it is almost entirely absent. And it is absent not only as a term but also as a concept. As for our more formal discourse, you find the expression more in our spoken and written English than in Arabic. Ask the man in the street, for instance, what he thinks of warm peace, most will not know what you are talking about. Many of those who fear "normalisation," though by no means all, fear it because they do not know what warm peace means; and many of those, though by no means all, who criticise Jordan for "rushing" towards peace do not understand what warm peace means.

Obviously, such misunderstanding springs from several factors. First and foremost, it springs from the long years and the sad realities (past and present) of the Arab-Israeli conflict itself: from the wars and the resulting disasters, from Israel's discrimination policies against Arabs in Israel itself and in the occupied territories, from official Israeli discourse which kept saying no to withdrawal and Arab rights, from the planting of illegal Israeli settlements and the confiscation of Arab land, from Israeli selfishness (still) in speaking about Jerusalem, from the acts of the extremists and hardliners in Israel, from the apparent lukewarmness towards peace on part of the Israeli public (until last week,

that is), and so forth.

Such scepticism and disbelief may be explained, as we have just suggested, within the context of past (and to some extent present) Israeli actions. But it should also be explained within the context of past and present Arab conception of Israel. Much can be said about this particular point here, but the important thing to emphasise is that until recently, many in the Arab World (and some until now) did not believe that Israel was serious about peace and about fair and square coexistence with its Arab neighbours. Such conception springs (in part at least) from a misunderstanding of Israeli politics, Israeli culture and Israeli society. And we have ourselves to blame for it. Until recently (and to some extent now), some have been trying to convince us that there is no genuine interest in peace within Israel, that there are no differences whatsoever between the Labour and the Likud, that the split within Israel between those who want peace and those who do not is either illusory or theatrical. Until recently, such conception was quite strongly held within many circles in the Arab World. But the same belief which brought down the late Israeli premier shattered, to a great extent, this misconception. Yes, it took a bullet to convince many in the Arab World that there is a big difference between Amir (the assassin and enemy of peace) and Rabin (the soldier turned peace maker), between the Likud and the Labour, and between the Israelis who wholeheartedly work against peace and the Israelis who wholeheartedly work for it.

What do we do now that peace is becoming a reality? Two things.

— The concept of warm peace, especially within the Arab World, needs to be explained to those who do not understand it. For years Arab have heard about the need to "end" the conflict with Israel, about a "resolution" of the Arab-Israeli crisis and a "solution" to the Middle East problem, but they have heard almost nothing about the nature of peace itself and the shape of what is to follow. It is time to address this important issue. We want to hear about this, no matter what the position is, in the press, media and academic research more than we have been hearing so far.

— Whether on the Palestinian, Syrian or Lebanese peace track, Israel needs to exercise more fairness and to show more sympathy and warmth towards Arab demands. What the Arabs want is land which Israel occupied, lands which must be returned to their rightful owners, in accordance with U.N. resolutions. The warmer Israel responds to Arab demands, the warmer and brighter the future looks.

Arab journalists and struggle for press freedom

By Lamis K. Andoni

AFTER FIVE days of deliberations in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa last week, Arab journalists faced the real challenge of how to formulate and carry out a plan of action to safeguard press freedoms.

The Sanaa meeting was different from the usual behind-closed-doors exchanges since, it concluded with a United Nations-backed declaration that prohibits Arab governments from imposing restrictions on Arab media. But will a declaration be enough to bring about a free press?

It was agreed from the outset that an independent pluralistic media cannot be attained without fundamental democratic changes in the Arab political system. But it was also clear that an independent media is crucial in effecting democratic changes. Consequently the most salient question remained the same: Which comes first, a free press or a democratic system?

The final declaration and recommendations by the working groups addressed this question by outlining guidelines that could free the media and consequently open up the political system. In other words, the participants came out with an implicit understanding that it is time for Arab journalists to take upon themselves the task of resisting restrictions and assert an effective role in re-defining the relationship between the governments and the interest groups on one hand and the Arab media, on the other.

The need to set up an Arab media watch group to monitor violations of press freedoms was seen as an important step albeit a serious challenge that will be resisted by some, if not most, Arab governments. Throughout the seminar, organised by the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), reminders of government restrictions and other forms of intellectual terrorism cast a heavy shadow on the hall of Al Hedda Hotel.

Posters of journalists killed in Algeria stare constantly at the faces of the participants—a tragic reminder of the lack of a real democratic process in the Arab World. Two Tunisian participants were banned from travelling by the government, while a number of Arab journalists who cannot go back to their countries flew in to Sanaa from their compulsory exile in Europe.

Even worse, some journalists were keen on defending repression in their countries for fear of losing their jobs upon returning. Reports on trials of media professionals in different Arab countries were the concern of side talks in the hotel's lobby and during lunch and coffee breaks.

But amid this bleak picture there was an ever present spark of hope, especially as participants gathered in working groups to think of practical ideas to promote independent and pluralistic media.

Professional training was on top of the journalists' priorities. It was decided that a regional Arab training centre should be established with support of international organisations. Questions like the responsibility of publishers to send reporters and staff members to training courses as well as modernising Arab newspapers were not adequately addressed.

The other complex question of professional ethics was raised once and again. Journalists conceded that professional ethics are the first to be sacrificed for promoting the newspapers' financial and political agendas. Consequently, media ownership was one of the first issues raised by participants. In general, state control was seen to suffocate press freedoms but there were also doubts about private monopoly of the media particularly television and radio.

The concept of public service media, as an alternative, was introduced and discussed. It was pointed out that most laws in the Arab World impede the emergence of public service media, that is partly funded by the government but mainly depends on contributions by individuals and companies.

Furthermore, television and radio are two important tools of power in the Arab World, and in some cases symbols of sovereignty. Therefore, many participants were sceptical that Arab governments will allow independent television and radio networks.

In his concluding remarks, Torben Krogh, the president of the International Programmes for the Development of Communications, cautioned that public service should not be confused with state-run media. "Public service is a framework, which secures that the citizen's be informed broadly and by diversified sources. Thus, the prime challenge of a public broadcast institution is to develop true pluralism in its programming," he said.

Mr. Krogh pointed out that pluralism in programming can only be achieved through full editorial independence. This is not an easy goal even in public service media since the state will still play a role in funding these services. In earlier sessions, Arab journalists raised many questions on the feasibility of public service media, especially that in most Arab countries, state funding and censorship go hand in hand.

Drawing on the experience of established public service broadcasting, Mr. Krogh conceded that problem of drawing the line between government funding and editorial independence exists in the most developed countries with rooted democratic traditions. But, in his view, the continuous struggle between state funding and media independence should not exclude public service media as a key element in a democratic and pluralistic society.

During the discussions, speakers repeatedly pointed out that the opposition in the Arab World, has rare access to state-run television and radio. The nascent Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation was criticised for not allocating equal time for candidates, for the national elections.

Although the idea of public service journalism, as part of a future strategy of promoting independent media in the Arab World was discussed at some length, the participants did not seem to define a clear path towards the initiation of such a media in the Arab World.

Ibrahim Al Bashmi, editor-in-chief of Al Ayam, a Bahraini newspaper, suggested that the experiment of his newspaper, owned by a group of journalists,

should be studied and emulated as a realistic model for an independent press.

What was on many participants' minds, however, was that even some of the privately owned media in the Arab World ended up as a mouth-piece of one government or another, either to ensure contributions or mere distribution of its publications.

Censorship of newspapers, resulting in an effective ban on a regular distribution of Arab newspapers in Arab countries, was repeatedly cited as one of the worst political and economic pressures on the Arab press.

Electronic communication and plans to make some of the Arabic newspapers available on the Internet was widely viewed as an alternative that could cross the barriers erected by censorship among Arab countries. But electronic communication, as an irreversible trend of the future, has its limitations in terms of potential censorship and perhaps more significantly that access might be confined to the more affluent for a long time to come.

Meanwhile however, the future emphasis would be on concerted efforts by journalists, in the struggle to lift all restrictions on press freedoms. The final declaration described detention of journalists, travel bans and economic pressures on media professionals as violations of their human rights.

But one of the biggest problems and obstacles that faces the future struggle of Arab journalists is that most of the press associations are either government-controlled, penetrated by informants for security departments or weakened by repression.

When a group of journalists started consultations to form a committee to defend Arab journalists, some participants proposed that such a group be independent from Arab press associations. Yet at the same time, it was agreed that strengthening rather than abandoning collective action through professional associations should be one of the aspired goals.

Arab journalists went to Sanaa mostly aware of their problems but they were put face to face with their responsibilities—the coming year will tell if the Sanaa conference was the beginning of an Arab media awakening or venue for venting accumulated frustrations that will not go beyond the walls of Al Hedda Hotel.

LETTERS

'A pilgrimage for peace'

To the Editor:

THE DARK-OLIVE, well-maintained Israeli van was making a smooth turn on a semi isolated road that cut through the rugged bushy hills of West Jerusalem when an apparently solid object unexpectedly hit its top. The noisy bang, which caused a short-lived but real shock among its passengers, had also interrupted the nice times of a popular Arab song, that was adding to the tranquility of the drive. None of the eight passengers, especially the Israelis, had good explanation to what had happened. To make the best of a strange situation, one Israeli passenger said: "They (whoever threw the object) probably thought that we are Arabs!"

The incidents could not take a heavier toll than it could, and the van must reach Tel Aviv before 2:30 p.m. His Majesty King Hussein's arrival on his first public visit to Tel Aviv.

Once inside Tel Aviv, one could tell that it was not going to be just another day. Check points manned by thousands of policemen were on every corner; motorists were banned from the streets; Jordanian and Israeli flags were staffed wherever it was possible; citizens of the city were bracing for an exciting experience. Even the weather was biased to the King on that particular day.

The warm welcome started the moment the King's helicopter landed at Sdeh Dov airport, overlooking the Mediterranean. After the inspection of the guards, the shake-hands and the exchanged short speeches by Shimon Peres and the King, the motorcade drove into the streets of Tel Aviv where, as it seemed from the window of the van, shops, offices, schools, and businesses, were abandoned by their occupants to line up on both sides of the streets, in order to have a glimpse of the Arab King. People of all ages were determined to say something more than just welcome. And they did.

The second leg of this historic event was at Ichlov Hospital, where, sometimes, seconds separate life from death, as on the eve of Nov. 4 last year when Yitzhak Rabin was brought in after having received the three fatal bullets only a mile away from that hospital.

On the compound of the facility, though, the set up was festive, flavoured with live music, flags, flowers, and goodies. The welcoming remarks by the officials of the city and the hospital called for repeated standing ovations. History tells its students that external forces and elements usually unite people. May be it was an occasion to review that theory, as Shimon Peres pointed out in his remarks before the King. "For a very long time, the Israelis did not look so united, and now it looks different, thanks to you, Your Majesty," he said.

The uniqueness of the visit can be attributed only to the King's vision, and his genuine belief in real peace.

But like on any other day, things have to cool down and people have to head home. So did we. But reflections from that moment on will never ebb.

On the way back home to Amman, the imagination had to muse with the events of the hectic day. In a way that journey and its circumstances, have summoned the long history of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the form of snap shots and flash-backs. The whole conflict at one point was summed up in the little incident that occurred to the dark-olive van earlier in the day.

People hurting other people without knowing exactly why, and without knowing who they are. Those who threw the solid object at our van were not the only ones who did not know whom they were going to hurt. Had they known that we were Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis heading for the same destination, may be that would have been some food for thought. But alas, they did not know, and alas, many others still choose not to know. The King's visit to Tel Aviv was a practical call to all those who did not know and to all those who choose not to know, that it was about time to put an end to all of this nonsense, and that it was about time to embark on a new phase.

In that context, the visit was a pilgrimage for peace by a King of peace.

Salim Ayoob
Amman

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

سكزيان، د. احمد

Society on the Move

'FUNNY' THINGS HAPPEN ON THE WAY TO THE 'FORUM'

During last week's visit by His Majesty King Hussein to Tel Aviv, culminating with a peace awards ceremony and dinner in Tiberias honouring former Jordanian and Israeli chief negotiators Fayed, Tarawneh and Ellakim Rubinstein, strange things happened. A sumptuous dinner of fresh and smoked fish over the King stood to depart. Scurrying to get seats on the two helicopters available, officials and aides took little note that they had left behind the man for whom the occasion had been held. Dr. Tarawneh, the modest, even-tempered ambassador to the U.S., was thus obliged to leave for Amman in the Royal Court motorcade sent to Tiberias in case of inclement weather. The drivers of the motorcade were reported to have left Amman that Wednesday at 9:00 a.m. and remained on-call without anything to eat until they returned to Amman at about 2:00 a.m. It seems they were forgotten. Meanwhile, a meeting arranged between the chief editors and directors general of the Israeli media and the Jordanian media was dampened by the absence of the men at the top of Jordan's major circulating papers. The Israeli side included Director General of Israel Television Yair A. Stern, and the chief editor of Yediot Aharanot. They met instead with some Jordanian journalists, who were served typical Arabic sweets and kosher appetizers. That meeting took place at the Israeli Ministry of Defence. By the way, those journalists who were not privileged to fly to Tel Aviv with the palace aides and officials, were bussed instead. They were surprised at having to pay exit fees at the border and quite disturbed to find that their passports had been stamped by the Israeli border control. Several deputies, like Abdul Hadi Majali, said they had expressed an interest in being part of the delegation, but that they were not invited. A dozen or so deputies who were asked to join the party hitched a ride from Amman with Israeli Deputy Chief of Mission in Jordan Jacob Rosen, perhaps opting for the comfort of a mini-bus over that of the C-130 that trans-

ported most of the delegation to Tel Aviv. And one other side bar: Qatari Ambassador to the U.S. Abdul Rahman Al Thani was said to have expressed a desire to be part of this trip, but as he was preparing to move from Washington, the time turned out not to be suitable.

A WOMAN FOR ALL SEASONS: Meanwhile, another ambassador, this time Sweden's new envoy to Jordan Agneta Bohman, has surfaced from the flood of work related to her taking on her post just prior to the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit last October, then making it through the holidays, to hold a "house warming" party last night at her residence. What guests may or may not have discovered about the 46-year-old Mrs. Bohman is that she is a graduate of the Sorbonne in Paris and holds a double masters in law and art from Uppsala University in Sweden. She entered the foreign service in 1974 and was first posted abroad as second secretary to her embassy in Damascus in 1977. In 1979 she was appointed first secretary to the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) delegation in Paris. From 1981 she was home-based at the foreign ministry, then off again to Paris as press attaché until 1987. She returned for a two-year stint in Stockholm as head of section at the ministry before taking a six-month leave to work as a relief officer at the United Nations Relief and Works Agency office in Gaza. Her experience there led her to publish "At the Dark Side of the Moon" in 1991, a book about daily life in Gaza during the intifada. In mid-1989 she returned to the foreign service and took up her assignment as first secretary in Vienna. There, she was promoted in 1990 to counsellor. In 1991 Mrs. Bohman was sent on special assignment for the European Commission to Croatia. Prior to her posting as ambassador (her first) to

Jordan, she had been cultural counsellor to her embassy in Bonn. Mrs. Bohman is here with her 10-month-old daughter. We wish them both a warm, warm welcome.

HER PEN ON THE PULSE:

Just returned from the United States — preceded by a month of R&R (rest and relaxation) in England — is Jordanian author Janset Berkok Shami. Mrs. Berkok spent three months in the Great Plains of the Midwest at the prestigious University of Iowa International Writing Programme (IWP), part of the Writers' Workshop at the university. Each year, the University of Iowa selects a handful of writers from the international literary community to give readings and lectures and contribute to a course in international literature. This was the first year that Jordan was represented at the IWP, which hosted 35 writers from 32 countries last fall. These writers range in stature from the most prominent in their home countries to those with international impact to promising young literary voices. Mrs. Berkok, Turkish by birth and Jordanian by marriage, writes in English. Although a little known figure on the Jordanian literary scene, she has published extensively in the U.S., and was selected, she believes, upon the basis of her first published novel, "Cages on Opposite Shores." Her forte is short story writing, and many of hers have graced the pages of



Janset Berkok Shami

several notable North American literary journals — the Mid-American Review, the Michigan Quarterly Review and Canada's Malahat. "The biggest benefit I had from the programme," Mrs. Berkok says, "was that I met so many Americans, who, by the way are very open. This helped me understand so many things about my audience that I didn't know before. And it showed me to what extent they understand what I write about. 'I don't write about American life, I write about our life here (in the region)' — so many are not even that interested, but for those who are, this helped me understand how to appeal to them." Mrs. Berkok has recently completed two additional novels — "The Upper Berth" and "A Direct Flight Home" — for which she is in search of a publisher. Mabrouk, welcome home and good luck.

GOOD REFERENCES: If your mind is in the clouds and you are seeking a career with Royal Jordanian, the man you'll have to impress is 32-year-old Mohammad B. Bakri. RJ's new human resources manager. With 13 years at the national air carrier under his belt, Mr. Bakri brings with him a B.A. in business administration from the University of Jordan, and several managerial posts, most recently: Airport administration manager, personnel affairs and employment manager, and administration and finance manager of the Alia Gateway Hotel. Under the rigorous training programmes required at RJ, Mr. Bakri has brushed up on his managerial skills, report writing skills, and interviewing techniques. He is well liked by his colleagues, which must say something for his interpersonal skills, and he's a family man — married with two daughters. We congratulate Mr. Bakri, and advise RJ hopefuls to go in with a smile.

Jennifer Hamarneh

Palestinian candidate uses laughter to warn against false democracy

By Hicham Abdallah
Agence France Presse

RAMALLAH, West Bank — A Palestinian candidate in Saturday's elections has picked a novel campaigning method, putting on a tongue-in-cheek satire of naked political ambition which has been playing to packed houses here.

Entitled False Democracy, the play was written by Mahmud Shukair, who returned to the West Bank two years ago after two decades in exile.

He is running as a candidate for the former communist Palestinian People's Party hoping to represent East Jerusalem on the 88-member self-rule council to

be elected in Saturday's historic vote.

His play centres around a character Ahn Safwan Al-Halas, who has no concept of the meaning of democracy and determines to win a seat on the council by any means possible in order to further his own interests.

A "nonveau riche", with solid tribal ties, he decides

he will have to act like a democrat in order to win the public's trust.

But unable to sway the crowds like his competitors because of his lack of oratory skill, he falls back on his considerable fortune to try to buy support.

Enlisting the help of a failed lawyer and an ex-prisoner who know he has

no hope of success, he launches a campaign of hollow promises backed by large sums of money.

The character of Halas, who embodies all sorts of faults and exposes them during the play, serves to unmask false candidates to voters," Shukair said.

The role is being played by Jordanian actor Zohair

Al-Nubani, who is of Palestinian origin.

"Halas is the prototype of the self-made man who wants to get into parliament by hook or by crook to protect his own interests," said Nubani.

Halas' election rival is not seen in the play, but his son and friend are shown discussing the merits of the

other candidate who deserves to be elected.

"It is enough just to allude to the worthy candidates. The aim of the piece is to illustrate a person who does not know the importance of the council to be elected," Shukair said.

At the end of the play, Halas finds himself alone, abandoned by his wife and

assistants who turn against him because of his lies.

But in a gesture of defiance, and perhaps also a hidden warning, he shouts out as the curtain falls: "I will become a deputy despite everybody because I am a sheikh, and son of a sheikh."

Palestinians and the peace process

Palestine In Crisis: The Struggle For Peace And Political Independence After Oslo

By Graham Usher.

London. Pluto Press in association with Transnational Institute and Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), 1995.

146 pages with appendices.
£9.95 in paperback and £30.00 hardback.

Graham Usher, who taught school in Gaza before becoming a correspondent for Middle East International (and later a contributor to other publications), was uniquely positioned to follow and then to cover the developments in the Palestinian arena — the intifada and the Oslo process. And he has failed neither the cause of the Palestinians nor the cause of history in this slim volume. It is a key reference work for all those who wish to understand what has happened on the Palestinian track of the peace process and to be able to predict what will happen.

The book is a thoroughgoing indictment of the negotiations which culminated in the First Oslo Accord, the two Cairo accords and the Second Oslo Accord and the implementation of these four agreements. Agreements which PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, the man chiefly responsible for them on the Palestinian side, himself admits are "bad" agreements, justifying his acceptance of them by saying, "but it's the best we can get in the worst situation."

Usher briefly (indeed, perhaps too briefly) describes this worst situation scenario wherein the PLO was bankrupt financially and isolated politically because of its stand during the 1991 U.S.-led coalition assault against Iraq. The intifada had begun to wind down and PLO-Jordanian relations were tense. UNRWA had curtailed its services to the Palestinian refugees.

One might have wished that Usher had gone into the extravagance and financial mismanagement in the PLO, once the richest ever independence movement in the world, which led to its bankruptcy. Or that he had mentioned the fact that Arafat (and King Hussein) adopted what the West termed a "pro-Iraq" policy in 1990-91 because of Arab solidarity and a desire to represent the wishes of the Palestinian (and Jordanian) people.

Usher then traces the peace process from the Madrid Conference, where the U.S. and Israel tried and failed to marginalise the PLO, through Oslo I, Cairo I and Oslo II, which, he rightly, states are the basis for the PLO-Israel settlement process. He shows how, at every stage, Israel was able to impose its will and its priorities on the PLO so that each succeeding agreement was, as far as the Palestinian people was concerned, worse than the preceding agreement. As a result the Palestinians are now in absolute possession of 3 per cent of the 1967 occupied territories and share control with Israel over 27 per cent while Israel retains 70 per cent — the bulk of the land of Palestine. And because of its ultimate control over the land Israel in fact dominates the fledgling Palestinian authority. Through the self-rule process of handing over Palestinian population centres to the PLO while holding onto the land, Israel has, at last, achieved its long-term objective of shedding responsibility for the alien Palestinian people while securing legitimacy for its presence in the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

Without accepting their arguments, Usher cites Palestinian apologists who say that the sheer momentum of the peace and self-rule process will right the wrongs

committed against the Palestinians in the four accords and carry the Palestinian people onward to self-determination and independence, a momentum which these apologists claim is ineluctable.

However, Usher describes how the Israelis have managed to break this momentum by building into the accords mechanisms to prevent the emergence of the Palestinians from Israeli tutelage and control, whether political or economic.

On the one hand, Usher shows that the PLO and the Palestinian National Authority under the autocratic Arafat are unable to make the best of the had agreements which they have negotiated because of their corruption and inefficiency and failure to introduce democracy. On the other, Usher demonstrates that the opponents of the Oslo accords, led by the Islamic Hamas Movement are unable to mount an effective challenge to Arafat or to the accords and are, therefore, as responsible as he is for the present sorry state of affairs.

Hamas, in particular, contemptuous of the nationalism which has preserved the Palestinians as a people during their long ordeal and of the Palestinian secularism which has countered Zionist sectarianism, is the victim of its own internal contradictions.

"Like other variants of political Islam, Hamas embodies an apparent contradiction. It is an entirely modernist political movement, deploying mass modes of social mobilisation and organisation to propagate its ideology and garnering a deserved reputation of financial probity, community service and military finesse. Yet its archaic and prohibitive interpretation of Islam cannot meet the political, social and economic challenges raised by self-determination. It further risks bequeathing an anti-democratic and sectarian identity that will ultimately corrode the very foundations of contemporary Palestinian nationalism."

Thus, the both those in power and those who oppose them have failed the Palestinians in this crucial period of their struggle for self-determination. And Usher believes this failure will continue, beyond the elections which will legitimise the accords and the Arafataocracy will take power afterwards.

Usher compares the tragedy of the present Palestinian situation to the days that the PLO was the most successful, historically, of the world's liberation movements in terms of its international "legitimacy" and popularity among the world's people. This situation, he admits, involved the paradox that legitimacy and popularity did not enable the PLO to liberate even "one inch" of its territory from Israel. That the "liberation" of the present three per cent came only when the PLO became subservient to Israel and its concerns.

In conclusion Usher quotes Dr. Haider Abdul Shafi to the effect that the Palestinian struggle has now to be carried on within Palestinian society, "to correct those negative aspects from which it has been suffering for generations," so that the national struggle can, to quote Usher, "be waged both through Oslo and against it, both within the current PLO leadership and, inevitably, in opposition to it. The reason is obvious. Palestinian self-determination does not lie in the terms of the Oslo-sponsored peace process. It lies, rather, in the still to be contested social, democratic, economic, institutional and international spaces that Oslo may, if politically and responsibly exploited, open up."

Michael Jansen

BOOK REVIEW

Monster mania hits Turkish lakeside city

By Aliza Marcus
Reuters

VAN, Turkey — Somewhere in the murky deep of the waters of Lake Van, there is rumoured to be a creature whose tail can turn the placid lake into a churning storm.

Claims of monster-sighting have sent a flurry of divers and amateur filmmakers to eastern Turkey's Van province, where the news is a pleasant change from the usual reports of fighting between separatist rebel Kurds and Turkish troops in the area.

"There are hundreds of people who have seen something," says the Ankara-appointed assistant governor for the province, Bestami Alkan, whose recent announcement that he saw the creature brought a chorus of other witnesses to the fore.

Alkan says he glimpsed the monster in 1994 during a picnic on the lake shore. But not wanting to alarm people, he kept quiet until a persevering Turkish journalist got it out of him.

"It is a nice monster, it doesn't want to hurt peo-

ple," he told Reuters, sketching on a napkin a smiling dinosaur-like creature he said he saw from about 150 metres away.

While some people stalk the perimeter of the 80-km wide lake to see if the monster is real, political columnists have jumped upon it as a symbol of Turkey's problems.

With economic problems preoccupying many people, some columnists see the real monster in the shape of inflation, which this year ended around 80 per cent, or unemployment, unofficially at 15 per cent.

To other commentators, the monster represents the tensions in the region from the 11-year battle by the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) for self-rule in eastern Turkey.

The Van monster — which some say could be floated carcasses of animals in the water or visions of the mist — has refocused attention on the province's tourism industry that has been hurt by the rebel war.

Centuries-old Armenian churches and buildings dot the surroundings, pre-Christian carvings fill the

museum and hardy pilgrims were always attracted by the imposing Mount Ararat, where the biblical Noah's ark is said to have come to rest.

Shop owners have begun selling monster badges, ornaments and other creature-related trinkets. But military checkpoints still outnumber souvenir stalls in the area.

So far only a handful of foreigners have come on a creature-watch, and none managed to see anything. A special diving team invited to search the 450-metre-deep lake for the creature was also disappointed.

"We can't say there wasn't anything, but we don't want to say there is anything. More research needs to be done," says Harun Sevinc, the head of a diving group from Ankara which has searched for the monster.

His team did find a creature in the water that it could not identify — but it was about the size of a lemil bean. They said more research needed to be done to identify it.

Lake Van skirts the city of Van, which has a history dating back to pre-Christian

civilisations and has seen its population double in the last decade to around half a million — largely from an influx of Kurds fleeing the guerrilla war.

The lake is popular for windsurfing and has an unusual mineral content that makes it easy to wash clothes in the water without using soap.

The composition of the water also precludes most life forms except seven types of seaweed, one fish, an eel, 137 types of microbes and, of course, maybe a monster.

Those unconcerned with mysterious life forms in the lake are concerned with the water itself, which is rising. Since 1870 the lake's water has gone up 3-1/2 metres, swallowing up shorefront cafes, houses and a whole town.

The bizarre rise of the lake waters coincides nicely with reports of a creature in the deep.

Experts say the water's rise is probably due to shifting tectonic plates at the bottom of the lake that could have closed off one of the underground outlets.

Fairy tale weddings at Disneyland

By Marie Sanz
Agence France-Presse

ORLANDO, Florida — The bride rides down the aisle in Cinderella's carriage, gracefully pulled by six white horses.

And after the "I do's" are done, a tuxedoed Mickey Mouse cuts and serves her wedding cake.

Welcome to matrimony at la Disney.

In a trend that is redefining the term "fairy tale wedding," more and more couples are going to Disney world to tie the knot.

Over a thousand couples from the world over — including 400 Japanese — have experienced Disney's nuptial bliss since the Florida park opened its wedding pavilion in July,

said Rebecca Miller, sales director of the "Fairy Tale Weddings" department.

Some 30 coordinators, with the aid of videocassettes and computers, are in place to offer the bride and groom a complete wedding package — from the invitations, flowers and music right down to the nuptial dress.

Guests can party in a wild west town, drink tea with Alice in Wonderland or dance all night surrounded by the trappings of a Polynesian island.

For the ceremony itself, couples take their vows on a tiny island located in the middle of the "Seven Seas Lagoon," an artificial lake surrounded by white sand.

On the island is the pavilion, a white building with

large hay windows, built in a style generic enough to accommodate ceremonies ranging from the simply civil to the deeply religious.

It can also play host to 250 guests or just a few family members.

The solarium where rings are exchanged is strategically placed for an imposing view of Cinderella's distant castle.

Thanks to Florida's marital laws, recently relaxed to allow for weddings on the quick, no blood test is necessary — only two witnesses are needed.

But it is not a wedding on the cheap: a Disney wedding costs a minimum of \$7,500 for more than eight people — without counting any hotel expenses. For 100 guests, the price is in the

\$20,000 range.

Cinderella's huggy costs \$2,200 (and \$750 just for the photo), while an appearance by Mickey or other Disney characters goes for \$400 an hour.

Miller said "older professional couples" are the most likely to want a Disney wedding package, in which even the most minute details such as reservations for guests are taken care of.

"We don't want the bride to feel she is a travel agent, so we help a lot," she said.

"Fairy tale weddings" also are popular among couples who find themselves taking their vows for the second or third time.

As Miller explains it, kids find it a lot more interesting to have "Mickey cutting mommy's cake."

Arabs urged to ease social impacts of reforms

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab officials opened a conference on economic reforms Wednesday with a call on member states to try to ease the social impact of such programmes.

Officials addressing the two-day conference on "the social impact of economic reforms in the Arab countries" said restructuring programmes would naturally hurt living standards and aggravate unemployment in the short run.

"Experiences have proved measures and policies of economic correction programmes will have their social costs, which could be high in some cases at least during the transitional stage," said Jassim Al Manai, director of the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF).

"Such policies could lead to a decline in real incomes and levels of consumption in the short-term while privatisations will result in the disposal of some workers," he said.

"Studying and evaluating the social effects and adoption of appropriate measures to ease them will give greater credibility to economic reforms in the Arab World and guarantee their viability," he added.

Many Arab states have been involved in reforms to tackle their economic problems, mainly slow growth rates, unemployment, inflation, deficits in their budgets and accumulating debt.

Experts have attributed such problems mainly to inadequate economic policies, misuse of funds and decades of government domination of the economy.

The reforms include privatisations, improvement of investment laws, development of stock markets and incentives for the private sector.

The reforms gained momentum in the past few years after Gulf oil producers slashed financial aid to fellow members in the Arab League because of a sharp decline in oil prices. The decline has also forced Gulf states to carry out their own reforms, which involved rationalisation of expenditure.

Several Arab countries have reported positive results from the reforms, with their budget deficit lowered and the gross domestic product (GDP) picking up.

Official figures for the period between 1991 and 1993 showed the combined Arab deficit was trimmed from \$68.1 billion to \$40.6 billion while the GDP grew from \$438.8 billion to \$507.6 billion.

But the reforms in most member states have been slow while other members have been hesitant to start such programmes.

Mr. Manai, a Bahraini, said some Arab countries have recorded lower deficits in their budgets and balances of payments, stability in their currency exchange rates, and an improvement in investment rules and incentives.

"But what has been achieved from economic restructuring programmes in the region still falls short of ambitions," he said.

"The social perspective is one of the main challenges facing economic decision-makers in the Arab countries. This explains the hesitation and relative slowdown in the implementation of important reform programmes, especially the sale of public institutions to the private sector," he pointed out.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) minister of state for financial and industrial affairs, Ahmad Al Tayer, said Gulf states were maintaining aid to other Arab

states despite lower oil income and he urged industrial countries to increase assistance to help Arabs press ahead with economic reforms.

"Reforms have become inevitable and unavoidable. It is not wise to keep postponing them because allowing further financial imbalances and deterioration in the various economic sectors makes it more difficult to tackle them in future," Mr. Tayer told the participants.

"As the main target of economic development is to improve the living standards of the people, the social effects of reforms should be identified and carefully studied in order to alleviate them, especially on low-income classes. The negative effects of economic reforms could jeopardise the entire process if they are not tackled," he concluded.

Magazine alleges Russian banking crime-ridden

NEW YORK (R) — Russian organised crime now controls between 50 and 80 per cent of the country's banks and has turned Russia into one of the world's major money-laundering centres, New York Magazine has said.

The magazine, publishing the results of an eight-month investigation by reporter Robert Friedman, said that Russia has also become a major consumer of American \$100 bills — cash the article said was used to fuel illegal activities, including drug dealing.

"The Russians have figured out a loophole and have been able to infiltrate the international banking system," Mr. Friedman said in an interview.

Mr. Friedman said that from January 1994 to the present, more than \$40 billion in new \$100 bills have been shipped to Russia to meet orders from Russian banks, an amount that far exceeds the total value of all rubles in circulation.

His article added that from Monday through Friday of any given week, at least \$100 million a night is flown from New York's John F. Kennedy Airport to Moscow, where the money "is used to finance the Russian mob's vast and growing international crime syndicate."

The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank has sanctioned the selling of the enormous amount of \$100 bills and the New York-based Republic National Bank, which specialises in selling currency, has taken a lead in providing the cash to Russian banks, Mr. Friedman said.

A spokesman for Republic National Bank said that Mr. Friedman's article with respect to the bank was "false, malicious and defamatory, a concoction of lies, misin-

formation and innuendoes" compounded by quotes from unidentified sources. The spokesman added that Republic's lawyers "are reviewing the article and will take appropriate action."

Mr. Friedman said the shipment of the money to Russia was legal because the banks in Russia ordering the funds from U.S. banks are chartered and officially recognised.

The money is purchased on behalf of Russian banks by American banks with whom the Russian banks have accounts, a spokesman for Republic said, adding, "the money is already in the U.S. banking system."

In his article, Mr. Friedman quotes a former U.S. State Department cable the magazine obtained in which a top Russian banking official cited estimates that anywhere from 50 to 80 per cent of Russian banks were under the control of organised crime.

The official, Viktor Melnikov, the Russian Central Bank's director for foreign exchange control, also "warned that much of this (imported) money was being used for illegal purposes, including narcotics trafficking."

Mr. Friedman quotes a former New York state banking official as saying, "Republic's guilty of wilful blindness, though not in technical violation of any law."

He also quotes an official in the Federal Comptroller of the Currency Office as saying, "that money is used to support organised crime. It's used to support black-market operations. In my personal opinion, this is an absolute abomination. It should not exist. Yet it appears that at least part of the federal government sees nothing wrong with it."

Soros: Drastic change needed to ensure Japan future

TOKYO (AFP) — International financier George Soros said Wednesday that Japan was a good bet in the near-term, but its financial sector and way of thinking needed a drastic overhaul if it was to avoid future crises.

Mr. Soros, who controls a powerful investment fund, said Japan had just been through "a tremendous financial crisis, a banking crisis" that exposed massive bad debt and undermined confidence in its financial system.

"I'm very optimistic on Japan in the near-term, but I am equally concerned that unless there is a radical structural change there will be another crisis some time in the future because this financial machine as it is today I don't think is viable," Mr. Soros told foreign correspondents.

He went on to say: "If people don't think for themselves, I don't think Japan will be a viable society."

Mr. Soros said that at the root of problems in Japan's financial system — sent reeling last year under a series of collapses among financial institutions, the billion dollar Daiwa Bank fraud scandal in New York and the massive bad debt problem — was a lack of individual thought in a consensus dominated society.

While "this consensus-dominated mentality" allowed Japan to develop a "fantastic" industrial base capable of producing enormous

wealth, the surplus it produces is then handed to the financial machine.

"The financial machine is equally fantastic, more so perhaps, in wasting those resources," he said, because it was not prepared to operate in a free market, mired instead in a directed market driven by the authorities, consensus and executives "who can be described better as bureaucrats."

"They know very well how to operate in that market, the directed market, but they are not prepared for a free market where people have to think for themselves," he said.

Mr. Soros went on to say that "Japan really has to be concerned about the open system that prevails in the world and not seek a mercantilist domination within that system."

"This surplus the industrial machine is capable of generating is a tremendous source of power and Japan has to find its place in the world. (But) unless it changes its mentality and opens up in some form I don't think Japan will be acceptable to the world as a leading power, perhaps the leading power, in the 21st century," he pointed out.

On Tuesday, financier George Soros recommended Japanese stocks as the best place for world investors to put their money at present and predicted the dollar

would continue its advance against the yen.

Mr. Soros is regarded as an influential figure whose investment opinions are closely followed in financial markets. His comments at an investment seminar in Tokyo buoyed Japanese stock prices but did little to stir the currency market, which found his keenly awaited speech something of an anti-climax.

"The best opportunity for world investors in Japanese equities, because rising liquidity is very good for the equities market," Mr. Soros said in a speech to the Global Investment Seminar, citing corporate restructuring and the benefit of a weaker yen as likely to boost firms' profits.

Mr. Soros also said he did not think Japanese stocks were too expensive.

His remarks, which came in the last 10 minutes of trade on the Tokyo Stock Market, helped push the key Nikkei average beyond the 20,500-point level.

On the subject of the currency market, Mr. Soros said he expected the yen to depreciate through 1996 because growth in Japan's money supply was faster than that of the United States.

"We believe that Japanese authorities will continue to maintain a more stimulative policy than that of the U.S., and that the yen will depreciate through 1996," Mr. Soros said.

But regarding a meeting of the Group of Seven nations' top monetary officials in Paris on Jan. 20, Mr. Soros said while he did not know what statement would emerge from the meeting, he did not expect it to have any long-term effect.

Eisuke Sakakibara, director-general of the Japanese finance ministry's International Finance Bureau, told the same seminar that the economic fundamentals of Japan, Europe and the United States pointed to a stronger dollar.

Mr. Sakakibara's comments are keenly monitored by the currency market because he was involved in driving the dollar back up from its record low of 79.75 yen bit last year.

Despite the two men's remarks, the dollar eased slightly against the yen on liquidation by trades who had been excited about the prospect of speeches by Mr. Soros and Mr. Sakakibara.

"The speech was plain and contained nothing insightful, but perhaps you cannot expect that from any hedge funds," said a senior

Japanese city bank trader.

Hungarian-born Soros is considered one of the world's most successful hedge fund managers. His fame grew in 1992 when he was dubbed "the man who broke the pound" after raking in profits by selling sterling on the expectation that Britain would be forced to pull its currency out of Europe's exchange rate mechanism (ERM).

In his speech, Mr. Soros also tipped bonds as an attractive investment, but said Japanese bonds had less allure than others. The Japanese bond market showed little reaction.

Turning to the United States, he said U.S. monetary policy was probably too tight in light of recent economic indicators and that this "will hinder the U.S. economy over the next few months."

Europe, meanwhile, would remain in economic difficulties throughout 1996, Mr. Soros said, adding that the current drive for European monetary union was inhibiting growth and that "the dampening effect of these policies may become more pronounced."

THE Daily Crossword by Elizabeth Gorski

ACROSS

- Jewish mystic
- Human rights org.
- Norwegian king
- Saudi's neighbor
- Weather word
- Change for Julio
- Feudal figures
- Job for a dummy?
- Be super at
- Atomizer
- Fourth latter
- "Continental" rock group
- Elaborate meals
- Places for new recipes?
- Much-publicized drug
- Jetson's son
- Made public
- Snob
- Mubarak's predecessor
- Roman fiddler
- Venture
- Actress Phoebe
- Hush-hush gp.
- Mensa Society qualifiers?
- Suspension
- Lagomorph
- Mischievous child
- Sponsorship
- Climbing vine
- Gustatory exam?
- Spoiler, of a kind
- Double curve
- Sensible
- Choose
- Twiggy home
- Cupid
- Secretaries

DOWN

- Stockings
- Trading letters?
- Mocking
- Overrun
- Eschew
- Rainbow shapes
- Find fault
- Prevaricator
- Dangerous
- Choose
- English borough
- Something of value
- Goes to the polls
- Laughing —
- Suffers
- J. — Joshua
- Evening song
- Pound of poetry?
- Outline
- Score endings
- Hotel chain
- Takes part in
- Play
- Ontario neighbor
- "I say..."
- Courage
- "E.T." co-host
- Blues
- Burned
- Harmful fly
- Maryland bird?
- Make a play for
- Publicist's concern
- Cathedral areas
- Equipment
- This — laughing matter?
- Holy women: Fr.
- Ascot locale
- B.A. word
- Asian New Year

Yesterday's puzzle solved

L	I	M	P	L	O	C	A	L	S	H	A	H		
A	G	E	E	N	A	T	E	H	O	N	E			
M	O	O	S	N	I	N	T	H	A	S	T	A		
A	T	W	O	O	D	C	O	U	R	T	M	E	A	D
				K	E	E	N		O	E	A	L	S	
G	U	I	T	A	R			C	U	S	S			
A	E	S	O	P		O	A	R	S		F	E		
F	L	E	M	I	N	G	W	O	O	D	C	A	S	
F	E	E		A	L	E	C		O	P	I	N	E	
S	T	E	A	M				S	T	A	R	E	R	
T	I	L	L		F	O	S	T	E	R	R	I	A	N
I	T	A	L		O	H	A	R	E		E	E	L	
C	A	T	O		O	I	L	E	R		D	A	T	E
K	N	E	W		T	O	M	E	S		S	H	O	T

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"Your wife wants you to bring home a loaf of bread, a gallon of milk and a halfway decent attitude."

JUMBLE. THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

YIKT
WHISS
REESOI
SNIULF

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: THE

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: LOUSE GIANT HAZARD THWART
Answer: What the wedding crew boss considered their good work — WORTH A RAZE

Peanuts

Andy Cap

Mutt'n'Jeff

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Get that plan working in the morning today which can gain your fondest aims and then explain it to your loved ones later this evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You understand the aspects for the days ahead and can get started on some new project today, but avoid one who is crafty.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Give some worldly matter plenty of thought then do the physical activities which are required today, but take it easy later this evening.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Study into new methods which can help you attain a loftier position in life. Make new contacts who are most worthwhile.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Study every phase of career activities ahead of you and then today you can handle them very well by concentrating on new ideas.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Plan entertainment for the days ahead in the morning, but later tonight avoid a disagreement with a neighbour or there could be conflict.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get busy and make your surroundings more functional and beautiful today and you can work more efficiently and be more happier in your duties.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be only with congenial fellow associates during the daytime today and later tonight don't try to force your ideas on others.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day today to make your home more comfortable and establish more harmony with your loved ones who reside under your roof.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You are thinking cleverly and can improve your interests and relationships early this morning and later this evening for your success.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You can handle finances wisely today so that you soon have a greater abundance. Consult with an expert about the property you own.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Study your needs and then contact a knowledgeable expert who can be of assistance of you and get good result for your career activities.

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be charming with others and gain their goodwill by being thoughtful. Make new and worthwhile contacts with a knowledgeable individual.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Follow your intuition — plus the advice of loved ones. Keep some promises made this evening, even though it is boring.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Find better methods for gaining your personal aims and safeguard your interests. A fellow associate has sound advice about a new project.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) A bigwig gives good advice today so that you can expand in outside project, so listen carefully to what is presented by this individual.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You may get a message from afar which can inspire you to greater success. Be careful not to neglect family affairs at this time.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Find some better way through which you can add to your present abundance. Take a look at your mate from a new perspective.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Be more enthused about the career activities ahead of you and you can handle them more efficiently and wisely at this time.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You should join with a dynamic fellow associate and get excellent results in business at this time. Get little tasks completed as efficiently as possible.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good morning today to make plans for the entertainments you desire for the days ahead. Avoid one who is tricky.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Plan what you want to do with your family during the days ahead is wise in the morning so that you can get many things completed efficiently.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is an ideal day today to get many tasks completed in the business world by the use of some slightly different methods of operation.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Concentrate on how to have a greater income and come up with a new idea. Get into a new and profitable outlet of operation.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

سكنا من ليل

January 18, 1996
SS WO

Gerard Depardieu — excess as the key to success

By Wilma Levy

How could a child, on the fringe of society, whom nothing prepared for the career as an actor and even less so for celebrity, have become one of the greatest performers of his generation? This is the mystery which the American journalist Paul Chutkow attempted to elucidate in the only authorised biography of Gérard Depardieu, published by Belfond in 1994.

PARIS — Gérard Depardieu, who was born on Dec. 27, 1948, in a modest family in Châteauroux in the centre of France, acknowledges that he had had the constant impression of being unique in his family and his town. In the 50s, Châteauroux contained an American base where he often hung around. He thus spent a large part of his childhood dreaming of America, of seducing it and then conquering it. At the age of thirteen, he gave up school to become an apprentice with a printer. At the age of fifteen, he plunged into a world of brawls and petty crime. In 1965, he finally went to Paris to join a friend who dreamt of becoming an actor. Depardieu, who, at the time, suffered from severe speaking difficulties, had the tremendous luck to meet three brilliant personalities: a drama teacher, Jean-Laurent Cochet; a doctor specialised in speaking difficulties, Alfred Tomatis; and his wife Elisabeth Gniot, an actress and psychologist, who became an unfailing point of anchorage for his stormy existence.

After a few parts in films or television dramas, he found success with "Les Valseuses" (1973). In the eyes of the French, Depardieu became a phenomenon: That of an outlaw saved by the cinema. At that time, he thought that play-

ing the role of traditional heroes and taking part in classical plots had no interest whatsoever. The role of a lout in "Les Valseuses" immediately set the tone for his kind of part and, after that, he played quite a number of roughnecks, which were not without causing some harm to his public image. There was no doubt that people found him disturbing.

In order to understand Depardieu's unique way of going about his profession, the best thing is to see him at work. Just as he grows his grapes to make his wine, he likes to see his scripts and his projects grow by working with a family of authors, directors and producers. "Good scripts do not just appear out of the ground. They have to be grown." His appetite for his work is just as enormous or even bulimic as for food and wine. He eats as he works, happy to be on the set 14 to 18 hours a day, maintaining a giddy pace. He could apply Oscar Wilde's words to himself: "Moderation is a fatal thing. Nothing succeeds like excess." His biographer notes that, first and foremost, Depardieu is a force, a force of nature. But he is also an uncommon emotional force.

Many actors spend months learning a part, but Depardieu sets out with the conviction that he has all the emotions that inspire human behaviour, inside him already: Love and hatred, jealousy and rage, tenderness and compassion and strength and weakness, and he gives priority to reflection and introspection. "Any quest begins in ignorance and incoherence. For me, creation means trying to explore all those areas which belong to us but which we do not yet know. It is only by living them, that I can discover them."

An open wound

In 1982, he met Francois Truffaut to make "Le Dernier Métro." "Le Dernier Métro" represented the beginning of the second part of my life as an actor. Truffaut made me more flexible and less complexed as an actor. The 80s were a particularly fruitful period of work. Films such as "Le retour de Martin Guerre," "Danton," "Camille Claudel," "Jean de Florette," etc., confirmed his success in France and

established his international reputation for good. In 1990, with "Cyrano," the director Jean-Paul Rappeneau found the two sides of Depardieu. "Cyrano" was someone who was weak and strong at the same time. Gérard played with his strength but also with his weakness." In France, spectators and critics acclaimed the film with the same enthusiasm and "Cyrano" silenced those who still doubted the actor's talent. Several American papers showered praise on the film. The New York Observer wrote: "He is more than a being of flesh and blood. He is an open wound and a vulnerability full of fury. The key to his dynamism lies not in his acting but in his emotion."

At that time, Depardieu, who already had several Césars, and had been nominated for the Oscar as the best actor, felt at the apex of his glory when the Time affair broke out. Several months earlier, Time magazine had devoted an article to Depardieu in which the latter "admitted" having taken part in his first rape at the age of 9. In spite of denials by the actor, the affair caused a scandal and affected him deeply. He then entered a self-destructive phase and responded to the crisis by plunging himself completely in his work.

In more than one way, the Time affair and the flop of "1492," in which he played Christopher Columbus, put an end to his American dream. From that moment, he wanted to return to his roots, make more personal films and go back to his vines. In 1989, Depardieu had bought Château de Tigné castle, with its 25 hectares of vineyards in the Anjou region. Tigné is his home and his land and he has left the world of film-making far behind him. Today, he sometimes says he is tired of the fighting and the artifice which go together with any great international career. At the age of 45, he has already made 80 films at the rate of 3 or 4 a year and his tastes have changed. Freed of his roles as a lout, he says he now prefers stories which are affirmations of his life. "Whether it is life, art, poultry, wine or people, I always look for the same simple things: Authenticity and the pureness of taste." — L'Actualité En France.



Gerard Depardieu

Taiwan sends imperial treasures on U.S. tour

By Joyce Liu
Reuters

TAIPEI — China's imperial treasures, open only to the country's royal family for thousands of years, travelled to Taiwan in 1949 with refugees who fled after the Communist victory over the Nationalists in a civil war.

Chang Pi-Teh still remembers the dangerous wartime journey from China nearly half a century ago.

People piled on the decks of ships for the 220-kilometre trip across Taiwan Strait impeded loading of the treasures.

"That was an amazing scene," Mr. Chang said. "When the last ship arrived in (Taiwan's northern) Keelung Harbour, I asked myself, is this a refugee boat?"

Mr. Chang, now deputy director of Taiwan's National Palace Museum, located at the foot of a mountain in a Taipei suburb.

Because the treasures confer a symbolic legitimacy on the regime which holds them, they were at the top of a list of items to be moved out of China when the Nationalist government retreated to the island after losing a civil war to the Chinese Communists in 1949.

It was not the first wartime move for the treasures.

In the 1930s, they were transported to Zhongqing in China's southwestern Sichuan province from Beijing — by train, truck and ship — for safety reasons when China fought against the invasion by Japanese troops during World War II.

Amazingly, 10 drum-shaped stone blocks, each weighing one tonne, from China's warring states period (475-221 B.C.) emerged unscathed from the journey to Zhongqing and back to Beijing, Mr. Chang said.

"Nobody could believe that the damage was so small when the boxes were opened," he said.

Soon afterwards, the treasures were moved south again because of the 1949 civil war, and then to Taiwan, where it took 23 months to complete cataloguing them.

Now, 47 years later, some of the treasures will be on the move again, this time to the United States, a country which Taiwan views as a priority in foreign relations. Starting on March 12 this year, more than 400 masterpieces of painting, calligra-

phy and antiquities will tour four museums in the United States for 13 months.

Negotiations on the U.S. exhibition started in 1991 and it is still being hotly debated here whether some of the treasures should go abroad — partly because they are fragile and, most important, because of fears that China may claim ownership when they are in the United States.

"We have to make sure nothing will go wrong. Any damage will be unforgivable in history," said Mr. Chang, who has spent more than 50 years with the treasures.

Taiwan and the United States reached agreement to December 1994 on the exhibition, dubbed the "splendours of imperial China".

"We have obtained the U.S. Judiciary guarantee

that all of them will come back to Taiwan after the exhibition," Mr. Chang said.

The collection, worth an estimated \$1 billion, will be put on display at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco and the National Gallery of Art in the U.S. capital Washington.

Diplomacy is one of the reasons Taiwan agreed to lend the treasures. "The exhibition will enable the Republic of China (Taiwan) to use culture to expand the room for foreign relations," a museum statement said.

Only 31 countries recognise Taiwan, seen by China as a renegade province after the civil war ended in 1949. Washington switched diplomatic ties to Beijing from

Taipei in 1979.

"We want to make the Palace Museum a world museum, and its works appreciated not only by the royal families in the past or by the Taiwan people now," Mr. Chang said.

Before the end of China's Ching Dynasty (1644-1911), the treasures were open only to the royal family.

Taiwan is willing to share the treasures with other countries but not with their original home, although Beijing has said it would not confiscate the treasures if they were exhibited in China.

"We have a lot of concerns such as the security, the exhibition condition and the facilities. It is very unlikely we will display them in mainland China," Mr. Chang said.



Hundreds of Taiwanese stage a sit-in protest in front of Taipei's National Palace Museum. They demanded that some of the imperial treasures, scheduled to be exhibited in the United States starting March, should not go abroad because they are fragile and China may claim the ownership in the U.S. (Reuters photo)

Egyptologist hopes to see 70-year dream rise from desert sands

By Laurence Chabert
Agence France Presse

CAIRO — Veteran Egyptologist Jean-Philippe Lauer is only months away from realising his lifelong dream to create a better understanding of the mysteries of the pyramids.

But at a proud 93 "and a half," the Frenchman is impatient to finally see the museum which he has designed close to the Djoser Pyramid at Sakkara rise out of the sand dunes.

The museum, which should be finished by the spring, is less than 100 metres from a surrounding wall of yellow limestone which he has rebuilt block by block over the past 70 years.

The wall was designed by the world's first known architect Imhotep 5,700 years ago and surrounds a funeral complex and the

famous Djoser Step-Pyramid at the site 30 kilometres south of Cairo.

It was Imhotep, a vizier and doctor, who invented the method of building with heavy stone blocks.

The "small, concise museum will help tourists better understand what they are going to see," Lauer said.

But "the interior will still take at least another year, and I don't know if I will still be around," he added sadly.

Construction was held up until October, after the summer heat. And then it was delayed again by the Antiquities Department worried that the roof of the museum could be seen from the parking lot. A sand bank may have to be built up.

Lauer wants to exhibit blocks found on the site, corniches and other pieces which he has not been able

to reassemble, as well as reproductions of the main steles or standing stones discovered in the pyramid's underground chambers.

He also wants to display a plaster model of the site that he made in Paris during World War II, as a guide to understand what he compares to a tribute "in huge natural stone to the 'ka' of the king."

According to the ancient Egyptians, the ka was the spirit or living force of the human body.

"In this huge complex, which includes remains of some of the oldest stone monuments in the world, most of the buildings are artificial and there is not a single real door," he said.

Instead huge simulations of open doors have been carved into the stone to let the "ka" celebrate freely the rites of heb-sed (jubilation)

for all eternity.

Lauer's model was displayed at the Sorbonne in Paris but damaged by students in the 1968 upheavals, then repaired and kept in a cellar. It was brought over in boxes to Sakkara seven years ago as plans for the museum slowly took shape.

Lauer is the last survivor of the foreign archaeologists hired in 1926 by the Egyptian Antiquities Department.

Since then he has worked continuously at Sakkara where he lived for a long time with his family in a small house on the edge of the desert. Now he only comes in the winter.

He can still remember the reflection of the Djoser Pyramid in the waters of the Nile during the annual floods which ended in 1936 once the first Aswan Dam was raised in height.

Pioneering African art event winds down in Britain

By Alan Raybould
Reuters

LONDON — The curtain will soon come down on the most ambitious attempt ever to present the diversity of African culture to a British audience.

A sprawling series of events — embracing everything from Nigerian Television to Ghanaian dancers, textiles to poetry — has taken place around the country under the "Africa95" banner since last autumn.

The centrepiece of the season was an exhibition of African art at the high-brow Royal Academy, including the oldest man-made artefact ever found on Earth, a hand axe from what is now Tanzania, reckoned to be over one-and-a-half million years old.

A spokeswoman for the academy said the exhibition had attracted around 2,000 people a day since opening last October.

"If you get that many through the door, you've got a successful exhibition," she said. It closes on Jan. 21, transferring to the Guggenheim Museum in New York in June.

The art critics have been as enthusiastic as the public, fascinated by the miniature coil-sewn baskets made by Tutsi women in Rwanda and Burundi, the naturalistic, metal figures cast by 13th century Yoruba craftsmen and the bronzes from the ancient Kingdom of Benin.

Africa95 has served to move the public away from the "masks and drumming view" of African culture, to use the phrase of Adotey Bing, who runs the Africa Centre in London.

"No academic voice will any longer tell us that the peoples of Africa were savages until the times of imperial dispossession a century ago," the noted British historian and African expert Basil Davidson wrote in the Guardian newspaper.

All the same, some Africans detect hypocrisy in the fact that many of the objects in the Royal Academy were plundered during colonisation and earlier Western forays into Africa, and will return to European museums and homes when the tour ends.

There were other misgivings, too. Africa95 cost around £5 million (\$7.75 million) to put on. Some £2.7 million (\$4.2 million) was raised through various sponsors, not all of them universally welcomed.

The Royal Academy show, for example, was sponsored by De Beers and Anglo American Corp amongst others, and African playwright

Gabriel Gbadamosi, also writing in the Guardian, was suspicious of the motives of companies that were once so prominent in the apartheid government of South Africa.

"The mask is African, but who's speaking?" Gbadamosi wrote. Clementine Deliss.

artistic director for Africa95, dismissed such criticism, pointing out that these companies were now actively helping to build a new South Africa alongside Nelson Mandela and his African National Congress.

"We would never have gone ahead with Anglo American and the others unless it had been agreed with the ANC, from day one," she told Reuters.

It was Deliss and other individuals active in the art scene who shaped what was to become Africa95 three years ago.

They managed to get senior figures at leading London galleries and museums on board, and found crucial early backing from Britain's Blue Circle Cement Company — a big sponsor of local arts in many African states — and the Baring Foundation.

One concern was to promote working artists — Western buyers tend to be interested only in "primitive" art, neglecting modern developments, Deliss said.

The Royal Academy was reluctant to include modern art, but the innovative Whitechapel Gallery in East London was keen.

It featured work from seven countries, including harrowing paintings from Uganda depicting the repression of the rule of Idi Amin and the equally deadly AIDS epidemic in the 1990s.

Elsewhere, writers toured the country giving readings, and films rarely

seen outside Africa found new audiences.

One, "Le Ballor D'or", a touching story from Guinea of a boy who realises his dream of becoming a footballer, was such a success that it had a limited commercial release in London.

The Barbican Gallery in the financial City of London put on an exhibition of colourful African textiles, demonstrating the links between art, politics and style.

The motifs covered anything from the coronation of Britain's George VI in 1937 to Mandela's election campaign, from Guinness advertisements to the 1994 devaluation of the CFA franc.

An "African Prom" at the Albert Hall headlined Senegalese singer

Yousouf N'Dour and featured a rare London appearance by Khaled, the charismatic superstar of Algerian rai music.

African music long ago made the crossover into the West, and the promoters of Africa95 hope links will now flourish between African artists and institutions and their counterparts here.

Deliss has high hopes for such collaboration with South Africa and, more surprisingly, with Senegal, in west Africa.

Its capital, Dakar, is now one of the most vibrant cities in Africa, she said, quoting Yousouf N'Dour: "Senegal is known for phosphates and peanuts, but one of its most important exports is culture."

NBA's Suns fire coach

PHOENIX (AFP) — Paul Westphal, whose Phoenix Suns have struggled to a 14-19 record, was fired as coach of the National Basketball Association (NBA) club here Tuesday.

Cotton Fitzsimmons, a 64-year-old veteran who had two prior stints as coach of the Suns, was named coach and said Phoenix could reach the Western Conference finals for a fourth consecutive year.

"I'm really looking forward to the challenge," Fitzsimmons said. "I think this team is capable of playing good basketball and winning."

Charles Barkley's team-high 23.3 points a game were not enough to offset seven injuries that ravaged the Suns, sidelining four starters and leaving them only eight players for their past three games.

"The injuries have taken their toll and we got to a point where it was time to shuffle the cards and make a change before this season was over," Suns owner Jerry Colangelo said.

"The bottom line is, we haven't seen our real team yet."

Barkley has been the subject of trade rumours and feuding with Colangelo, who vows not to deal Barkley even though the 1992 U.S. Olympic Dream Team member wants to end his career with a title contender.

"You don't deal when you're down," Colangelo said. "We would be willing to make a trade if it were in our best interests, but the chances of that are slim and none."

The caper for Westphal, a former Phoenix star, came when the Suns were routed 89-74 by Cleveland, scoring their fewest points in a game in 14 years.

"It's just not happening for us," veteran forward A.C. Green said. "But basketball is like life. When the storm passes, the sun will come out. We just have to stick together."

The Suns' scoring average is at a 19-year low 104 points. They lost twice to the lowly Los Angeles Clippers and suffered their first defeat at the hands of long-time loser Minnesota in 26 matchups between the two.

"People have us six feet under and are dumping dirt on us," Suns centre Joe Kiliene said.

Bulls win again as Rodman gets first triple-double

CHICAGO (R) — Michael Jordan scored 32 points and Dennis Rodman got his first career triple-double as the Chicago Bulls raced to their club record-tying 26th straight home win, 116-104 over the Philadelphia 76ers Tuesday.

Rodman had 21 rebounds, 10 assists and 10 points in his 699th NBA game.

"Dennis is Dennis," said Jordan, who suffered a back injury in the fourth quarter. "Sometimes, Dennis just wants to go, and tonight we let him go."

"Michael strained his back in the beginning of the fourth quarter, he'll be okay," Bulls coach Phil Jackson said. "Our second unit finished off the game the way we hoped. We had good energy for the whole game and a beautiful first half."

Scottie Pippen added 14 points for Chicago, which tied the franchise mark of consecutive home wins previously set in 1991. The Bulls are 19-0 at home this season and have won nine games in a row to improve to a league-best 32-3.

Rookie Jerry Stackhouse scored 24 points and Vernon Maxwell and Sharone Wright added 19 apiece for Philadelphia, which has not beaten the Bulls since December 1993, and has not won at Chicago since December 1992.

Jordan took another jab at Stackhouse, whom he outscored 48-13 last week following his young fellow North Carolina Alumnus's comment that the NBA was "easy."

"Jerry played pretty well, but when he goes back and watches some more film, he'll realise he needs to do more things and learn to split his game between offence and defence," Jordan said.

"The Bulls are definitely playing the best ball right now," Maxwell said. "Jordan is leading them and the other guys are playing off him. Jordan is back in rare form and he's playing well."

In Seattle, Shawn Kemp recorded 31 points and 16 rebounds and Hersey Hawkins and Gary Payton added 21 points apiece as the Super-sonics posted their 10th straight home win, a 99-90 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Kemp, who shot 12-of-17 from the field, registered his eighth straight double-double.

Seattle improved to 15-1 at home this season.

Terrell Brandon scored 24 points and Dan Majerle added 21 for Cleveland, which is 1-3 on its current seven-game road trip. The Cavaliers shot just 57 per cent from the foul line (25-of-44).

In San Antonio, David Robinson had 28 points and 13 rebounds as the Spurs coasted to their fifth consecutive victory, 121-97 over the Boston Celtics.

San Antonio has won 14 of its last 16 games overall and nine of its last 10 at home. The Spurs are 15-4 at the Alamodome and have a one-half game lead over the Houston Rockets in the Midwest Division.

Dana Barros scored 22 points for Boston, which has lost eight straight road games and 10 of its last 12 overall.

In Toronto, Rik Smits scored 29 points and Reggie Miller netted 15 of his 27 points on three-pointers as the Indiana Pacers defeated the Raptors 110-102 for their fourth straight victory.

Damon Stoudamire had 29 points and 10 assists and Tony Massenburg added a season-high 24 points for Toronto, which has lost seven of its last eight games.

In Portland, Clifford Robinson scored 24 points and Arvydas Sabonis had 15 points and 15 rebounds as the Trail Blazers stopped the Denver Nuggets, 87-69.

Rod Strickland had 17 points and eight assists for Portland, which won its fourth straight game.

Jalen Rose scored 16 points and rookie Antonio McDyeess and Bryant Stith added 12 apiece for Denver, which lost its second straight in scoring a season-low point total.

RESULTS

Indiana	110	Toronto	102
Seattle	99	Cleveland	90
Chicago	116	Philadelphia	104
San Antonio	121	Boston	97
Portland	87	Denver	69

EU asks UEFA to comply with Bosman ruling

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Commission said Wednesday it was asking UEFA to comply with the European Court of Justice ruling on its transfer and foreign player systems and would take "necessary measures" if the European soccer body did not do so.

"Nobody in the (European) Union is above the law," commission spokesman Nikolaus Van Der Pas said.

Van Der Pas said the commission had discussed at a meeting on Tuesday a statement by UEFA that it was maintaining its rule on foreign player limits for teams in its club competitions this season. It had decided to write to UEFA asking it to come into line, he said.

"If its reaction is negative, the commission reserves the right to take future measures," Van Der Pas added.

Another spokesman said this could include taking UEFA to court or fining it.

It was not immediately clear under what EU regulation a fine could be imposed and spokesmen refused to be drawn on details.

Fine could end Graf tax affair

BONN (AFP) — German legal authorities could drop enquiries into the tax affairs of tennis star Steffi Graf if she pays a five million mark (\$3.5 million) fine, German television said Tuesday.

ZDF television reported that Graf's lawyer, Peter Danckert, had proposed she pay just two million.

Her father, Peter Graf, has been in jail on remand since August on suspicion of withholding information on his superstar daughter's earnings. He faces up between 6 and 9 years in jail if finally found guilty.

World number one Steffi, 26, denies any wrongdoing on her part.

Atletico go through in Spanish Cup

SEVILLE (R) — Atletico Madrid moved into the quarter-finals of the Spanish Cup on Tuesday after scoring two early goals and surviving heavy second-half pressure to beat Real Betis 2-1.

The Spanish League leaders, who took the tie 3-2 on aggregate, were aided by a series of apparent blunders by referee Jose Rubio, who

should have sent off Atletico goalkeeper Jose Molina for deliberate handball outside the area when the game was only three minutes old.

Atletico took control of the first half, scoring through midfielder Delfi Geli in the 24th minute and adding another just a minute later when Bulgarian forward

Lyuboslav Penev finished off a fine move on the right by midfielder Jose Luis Caminero.

Betis fought back, and a headed goal from former Atletico forward Juan Sabas just after the break gave the southerners a fighting chance.

But shortly afterwards re-

feree Rubio inexplicably failed to signal a penalty when Roberto Solozabal brought down Alfonso Perez in the Atletico goalmouth.

The referee needed police protection from a shower of objects thrown from the stands at the final whistle. Similar incidents have brought stiff fines from the Spanish soccer authorities.

Agassi wins easily; Fleurian ousts Edberg

MELBOURNE (AP) — No worries, mate. Andre Agassi has mended from a knock on the knee that nearly put him out of the Australian Open in the first round.

The defending champion and No. 2 seed — competing with Pete Sampras and Thomas Muster for the top spot in the rankings — scampered around the court and belted winners from all angles in a 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 victory Wednesday night over fellow American Vincent Spadea.

Agassi had banged his right knee into a post in a misstep on a metal spiral staircase in his hotel room Sunday night and, hobbled by the swelling, barely escaped being upset Monday by qualifier Gaston Etis of Argentina in a five-set match. On Wednesday, he no longer sported a bandage on the knee.

Agassi said he has been treating his knee with electrical stimulation and ice and holding back on practice.

"By next match, it should be 100 per cent," he added.

Earlier, Stefan Edberg made the first big farewell of his farewell tour.

Edberg, a former No. 1 player and now a veteran two days shy of age 30 bowed out of the Australian Open in the second round after saving two match points.

If age has slowed Edberg, who plans to retire at the end of the year, a nagging groin injury didn't seem to hinder women's co-No. 1 Monica Seles.

While Edberg struggled through his second five-set match in two days, losing 6-4, 2-6, 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 to French qualifier Jean-Philippe Fleurian in just under three hours, Seles disposed of Katarina Stadenikova of Slovakia 6-1, 6-1 in 51 minutes.

Another famous name returned to prominence. Patrick McEnroe, younger brother of former No. 1 John, overcame a miserable start to upset No. 14 Andrei Medvedev of Ukraine 6-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2. The younger McEnroe, ranked No. 37, was a semifinalist here in 1991.

Another casualty among seeded players included No. 9 Wayne Ferreira of South Africa, who was bampered



Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina waves to the crowd after her victory in the Australian Open match.

by a hamstring injury in a 6-1, 6-3, 6-0 loss to Karol Kucera of Slovakia.

Nor. 3-Master advanced to the third round with a 6-4, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (7-4) victory over Javier Frana of Argentina, and No. 5 Michael Chang breezed past Jakob Hasek of Switzerland 6-1, 6-3, 6-3.

Women's No. 3 Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, a finalist last year in three Grand Slams but a winner in none, beat Germany's Barbara Rittner 6-3, 6-2 in a second-round match.

Edberg, whose six Grand Slam titles include Australian Open triumphs in 1985 and 1987, has fallen from No. 1 in 1990-91 to No. 31 in the rankings.

But no one has matched his durability. This was his 51st consecutive Grand Slam tournament — the most among active players. He also has played the most five-set matches among them, with a record of 26-19.

The ovation at the end of today's match, he said, "felt good in one way and bad in one way because I still lost the match, but at the same time you feel good about all the support that I had."

Fleurian, ranked 133rd in the world, almost didn't make it through the qualifying round.

"I knew that everybody would be for Stefan," Fleurian said. "This is his last Australian Open, and he is such a gentleman. But that didn't mean they were against me. That's a big difference."

"Gentleman" wasn't the word being used at the match between No. 8 Jim Courier and fellow American Jeff Tarango, notorious for outraging the tennis establishment by walking out of a match at Wimbledon last year, accusing an umpire of corruption.

Both say they are friends off court, but Tarango was shouting at the umpire, trying to have Courier penalised for foul language and throwing

Naoko Sawamatsu of Japan and two American seeds — No. 9 Mary Joe Fernandez and No. 13 Chanda Rubin.

Sabatini beat Katarina Habova of Slovakia 6-4, 6-3. Majoli beat American Lori McNeil 6-3, 6-2; Fernandez beat Maria-Antonia Sanchez Lorenzo of Spain 6-2, 6-0; Rubin beat Tina Krizan of Slovenia 6-7 (7-3), 6-2, 6-3.

Advancing among men's seeds were No. 11 Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands and No. 15 Todd Martin. Krajicek beat Frederik Fetterlin of Denmark 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 and Martin struggled past fellow American Richey Reneberg 6-2, 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7-5).

Memories mingle with hope as Sawamatsu moves ahead

MELBOURNE (AFP) — One year ago, Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu played and won a first-round match at the Australian Open relying on pure emotion and instinct only hours after learning that her family's home in Kobe had been destroyed in the great Kansai earthquake.

On Wednesday, 365 days later, the 15th seed shrugged off fading bad memories of the disaster and moved into the third round of the first Grand Slam of the year by beating Linda Wild of the United States 6-4, 6-3.

"Today I looked at the calendar and saw that it was January 17," said Sawamatsu, whose victory at Flinders Park thrusts her into a rematch of the contest she won last year, the morning after the quake, against compatriot Ai Sugiyama. Sawamatsu is hoping to move farther ahead this year than she did in 1995, when she set a benchmark at major events for Japanese women by reaching the quarterfinal stage.

The 23-year-old from Nishinomiya has moved on since the day of the earthquake. Her family — none of whom were injured in the

tragedy that killed at least 5,000 — has moved across the bay from Kobe to Osaka to try to construct a new life.

Sawamatsu now rents a flat in Tokyo as a base for her tennis travels on the WTA Tour.


She comes from a tennis dynasty: her aunt Kazuko and her mother Junkio broke ground for Japan in 1970 when they reached the doubles quarterfinals at Wimbledon, losing to Billie Jean King and Rosie Casals. Kazuko went on to win a Wimbledon women's doubles title five years later with Anne Kijimura.

As time heals mental and emotional wounds caused by the earthquake tragedy, Sawamatsu's hopes for tennis in 1996 are growing.


"I was in shock from what had happened. I also felt guilty because I was able to play tennis while there was so much suffering going on at home."

"I feel so sorry for the families of those who died and for people who lost their homes."

The world No. 17 will have to do quite well to beat her 1995 performance.



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PHILADELPHIA		PLAZA		CONCORD		The popular star Nadia Al Jundi, Farouq Fishawi, and Mahmoud Hamida in The Woman that Shook the Throne of Egypt Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30 The Lion King Show: 12:30, 3:30, 5	Theplay "Ahlan Tatbie" Welcome Normalisation Shows: 8:30 p.m. For reservation call 625155
Pierce Brosnan as James Bond 007 in GOLDENEYE Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:05, 8:30, 10:30 p.m.		POCAHONTAS Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 5 p.m. Sylvester Stallone...in JUDGE DREDD Shows: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30		CONCORD "1" * ACE VENTURA "2" Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:30, 10:30 CONCORD "2" * Batman Forever Shows: 3:30 * DISCLOSURE Shows: 5:30			

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Meeting opens on regional transport

AMMAN (Petra) — A four-party sub-committee on transport emanating from the working group on regional development of the Middle East Peace Process on Wednesday opened a two-day meeting in Amman to discuss ideas and practical steps for cooperation among their countries in transport affairs.

The sub-committee which groups representatives of Jordan, Egypt, Israel and the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) is also studying the European Union's experience in joint transport systems.

Jordan's delegate, Dr. Dureid Mahasneh, told the meeting that the peace process had contributed towards laying a solid foundation for economic cooperation, adding that the transport sector was one of the most important sectors since it provided the basic infrastructure

for promoting trade and tourism among the countries in the region.

Speaking after the first session, Dr. Mahasneh said that Jordan, which enjoys a central geographical location, would benefit from opportunities for trade, transit operations and transport activities.

The transport agreement which Jordan signed with Israel on Tuesday, Dr. Mahasneh said, would further enhance the peace treaty signed in October of 1994 as it will help connect the West Bank with Jordan and Israel and open new markets for Jordanian products and also boost the country's tourism industry.

He said the European Union (EU) nations have expressed readiness to finance regional transportation projects, something which he said should prompt the countries of the region to speed up plans for transportation networks.

Deputies assail Ethiopia

(Continued from page 12)

ment's decision to increase customs duties on cars," he said. "I'm seeking a quick decision from the government to reschedule the customs and licensing fees on cars," he added.

IAP Deputy Ibrahim Kilani thanked Minister of Health Aref Bataineh for the ministry's decision to ban the marketing of fish that was not

fit for consumption and insisted on the need to continue monitoring the "leakage of these commodities to the local markets."

The House continued discussions of the House's bylaws. It is expected to meet on Sunday and continue discussions of the 116-article draft.

Violence does not affect polls

(Continued from page 1)

chiefs — Islamic Jihad leader Fathi Shaqaqi and Yahya Ayyash, presumed mastermind of a suicide bombing campaign by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas). But the kind of spectacular bombing attacks that the hardliners have shown themselves capable of have yet to materialise.

Hamas had said it would target Israelis to avenge the death of Ayyash, known as "the engineer," in the explosion of his cellular phone in Gaza 12 days ago.

Israeli soldiers still occupy Hebron, the only Palestinian town with Jewish settlers still living in the town centre, and under a West Bank self-rule deal signed in September maintain overall responsibility for security in the area of the attack.

The two Israelis were killed late Tuesday when Palestinians following them to a car fired at their vehicle late Tuesday.

The two were travelling from Hebron to Jerusalem and had slowed because of fog near the village of Bayt Immar. They were then fired upon by an automatic weapon from the car behind.

Witnesses quoted by Israeli Radio said one of the Israelis was able to get out of their car, an army Renault 5, and fire back before dying of his wounds.

The Palestinians, travelling in a silver Mercedes, fled the scene. The Israeli army clamped a curfew on the area and began a manhunt.

Israelis quit Abu Dis HQ

(Continued from page 12)

Faisal Hussaini, Palestinian minister in charge of Jerusalem affairs, was overseeing them for the Palestinians. Mr. Beilin's office denied the report and accused Mr. Olmert of using scare tactics to get re-elected.

"No negotiations are being held under the Israeli government or Yossi Beilin," said his spokesman, Aviv Sharon. Mr. Hussaini's office said he would have no comment on the report.

In a speech Tuesday, Mr. Beilin said he does not agree that Israel must preserve the status quo on Jerusalem, the

newspaper Davar Rishon reported.

"The real meaning of the status quo is that Israel does not have a recognised capital," Mr. Beilin said. "We have to discuss the issue with the Palestinians so that they recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital. If they do, the whole world will recognise it."

Davar Rishon quoted sources close to Mr. Beilin as saying that Mr. Hirschfeld and Mr. Pundak had met with Palestinian officials at academic conferences where the question of Jerusalem was discussed.

Russian

(Continued from page 12) dashed in the speaker vote. Mr. Zhironovskiy's 51 deputies were widely believed to have backed Mr. Rybin to a large extent to the vote, but the support was not enough to check Seleznev's advance.

Mr. Seleznev narrowly

failed to win a first vote Tuesday evening when he gaied 219 votes, falling seven short of the absolute majority.

The communist candidate had earlier pledged to respect smaller centrist blocs in the leftist-dominated legislature, and strive to build consensus.

'Egypt smashed 15 Israeli spy rings'

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt has smashed 15 spy rings working for Israel since the two countries signed peace in 1979. An Egyptian weekly Al-Mussawwar said Wednesday. An Egyptian has been executed, five sentenced to hard labour ranging from five years to life, and two others jailed for 15 years as a result, the newspaper said. Meanwhile, two Israelis and another foreigner whose nationality was not given have been thrown out of Egypt, it said. The latest scandal came to light when an Egyptian bedouin tribesman was charged in January with spying for Israel for 11 years. The state prosecutor has asked for a sentence of life with hard labour. The deputy head of the ruling National Democratic Party, Mustafa Khalil, said there was nothing unusual in the spy figures. "Spying has always gone on between European countries and the United States even though they are allies," Mr. Khalil told Al-Mussawwar.

Mubarak appoints eight new governors

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has appointed eight new governors in key provinces and urged them to remove all obstacles hindering investment and setting up small businesses, Egyptian newspapers said on Wednesday. The new governors were sworn in on Tuesday in the presence of Mr. Mubarak and his newly-appointed Premier Kamal Ganzouri. Al-Ahram newspaper said Mr. Mubarak's new appointments were aimed at giving impetus to the government's drive to encourage investment and development in the provinces.

Gulf war signs fade in Iraq, scars linger

By Leon Barkho
Reuters

BAGHDAD — Baghdad no longer displays many traces of the Gulf war bombs that fell five years ago this week.

But an exhibition of war damage, the unrestored Amirya shelter where an allied bombing killed hundreds and the grinding poverty of millions of Iraqis assure that no one can forget the "mother of all battles" and its devastating impact.

Communication centres, bridges, skyscrapers, refineries and power stations levelled in the U.S.-led allied bombing raids that began at 2:30 a.m. January 17 (January 16 in the U.S.) were quickly repaired.

Today, beside each rebuilt edifice stands either a poster or a bronze statue of President Saddam Hussein, raising his arm in victory.

"The upright have reconstructed what was destroyed by the ungodly," reads a banner at an exhibit

installed in an ancient building overlooking the Tigris River.

Visitors to the "steadfastness and confrontation exhibition" can view hundreds of glossy pictures and maquettes — one set displaying the extent of damage to each site and another showing how Iraqi engineers restored it.

Chlorinated water today reaches every house and power cuts are rare in this city of five million people.

Petrol and other oil products are cheaper than water — in part because the U.N. bars Iraqi oil exports under the Gulf war sanctions imposed for Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

Iraqis can choose among four television channels — and there was a public outcry when the Sheba (youth) Channel, run by President Saddam's eldest son Uday, went off the air for 24 hours because of a technical fault this month.

Tens of thousands of football-crazy Iraqis cram the Shaab Stadium twice a

week to watch league matches and millions are said to take part in the football pools.

Shopwindows in Baghdad's thoroughfares display chandeliers, Japanese household utensils, refrigerators, electric ovens and aircooler. Grocers have a variety of foreign foodstuffs for sale ranging from French cheese and Turkish delights to pure Australian honey — but not many Iraqis can afford them.

"Life proceeds smoothly in Iraq but only for those who are privileged enough to have the money," said a U.N. relief official. "Gulf war sanctions have divided the Iraqi society into a minority of haves and a majority of have-nots and perhaps nothing in between."

It is not difficult to see the other side of the coin in Baghdad — just stroll into an inner part of the city behind buildings destroyed by the allies and defiantly

reconstructed by the government.

Barefoot mothers kiss your shoulder, begging for cash or a piece of bread. Small boys and girls, emaciated and in ragged trousers, may kiss your shoes and pull on your hand to beg for money.

In between, one of the oldest and poorest areas of Baghdad, up to seven families may inhabit the same dilapidated house that could fall down any time.

On main streets, young boys squat on the ground selling cigarettes, used shoes or clothes. "They are part of the new emerging army of petty traders who find nothing else useful to do," said the U.N. relief official.

In state-run hospitals patients are told to bring their blankets, spoons, saucers and, lately, also their food. Medicine has to be bought from pharmacies at spot market rates.

"The Mother of Battles is continuing," declared President Saddam in a cabinet

address this month. He said the U.N. trade sanctions imposed for Iraq's invasion of Kuwait were more harmful than the bombs dropped by "the 30-state aggression" during the Gulf war.

Just days before the Gulf war's fifth anniversary, the Iraqi leader declared war on high prices and inflation. He assured the nation that "victory" this time would also be on his side.

"It is not the mother of all battles which Iraq thinks of now. It is how to survive the sanctions which have started to bite... and (are) biting deep," said a Western diplomat.

Five years after the war, Iraqi leaders are striving to check hyperinflation which Viktor Wahroos, deputy U.N. relief coordinator in Baghdad, calls the number one enemy for Iraq.

The inflation, which the U.N. puts at 5,000 per cent for essential items, has driven millions of Iraqis to below poverty level. Government wages, Mr. Wah-

roos said, bought almost nothing at a time when five million Iraqis relied on them for survival.

"This year it is the war on the economic front that is preoccupying the Iraqi leaders. It seems it is no longer how to commemorate the 'mother of all battles,'" the diplomat said.

The ministry of culture and information has unveiled a low-key programme of festivities to mark "the fifth anniversary of the Zionist and American military aggression in the 'Mother of Battles.'" The official press is silent on whether any festivities were in the pipeline.

There is one constant reminder, however, of one of the bitterest memories of five years ago: The allied bombing of the Amirya shelter in which 403 people were burned to death.

Amirya is the only devastated edifice the Iraqis chose not to reconstruct, preferring to preserve it for posterity as a monument to the horrors of war.

Aziz confirms Iraqi move

(Continued from page 1)

Washington, thousands of Iraqi students earlier condemned the United States at a protest rally in Baghdad to mark the war's start early on Jan. 17, 1991.

President Saddam, who was smiling and wearing a business suit, said he was "ready to help those who want to be guided on the path" of rapprochement.

He complained that several Arab countries had not completely withdrawn their support for the U.N. oil and trade sanctions imposed after the invasion of Kuwait.

"Some Arab (leaders), who think they are well intentioned, continue to follow the path they chose from the

beginning, even though it is false," he said.

"If Arabs have faith in themselves, they will be able to resume their role" in the service of Arab causes, he said.

The Iraqi leader paid tribute to the endurance of the Iraqis since the war and said the "lion that is, Iraq, is in good health" despite the sanctions, and the "future belongs to it."

President Saddam ignored reports that Iraq was ready to reopen talks on the limited oil sales.

Chief U.N. spokeswoman Sylvana Foa said Dr. Ghali "expects to receive soon an official communication from the government of Iraq in-

dicating their readiness to talk about resolution 986."

Ms. Foa said that Dr. Aziz had called the secretary-general in London.

Ms. Foa, speaking at a briefing, refused to give details of the telephone conversation or of the letter.

But she said Dr. Ghali, who returns to New York on Thursday, was "continuing consultations" following Dr. Aziz's call.

The Iraqi dollar rose against the U.S. dollar on Wednesday on the news that Baghdad may be ready to negotiate a limited oil sales deal.

"A dollar was worth 2,850 dinars yesterday," said Abdul Basit Abdul Jabbar of Yama Exchange Company in Baghdad. "Today it is offered for 2,250 and no one is buying."

Israel keen to make success of peace

(Continued from page 1)

agreement was implemented in two months.

"There was never a Palestinian authority, there was never a Palestinian territorial address in history and the Palestinians were never in charge of their education, police or commerce," he said.

"Now this was given to them in a silver platter. 'Nobody forced us to do so and we did it in the face of very heavy opposition,' he said, adding that Mr. Rabin "paid for it with his life because of it."

"We have shown our intentions," he said, describing the Jan. 20 Palestinian self-rule elections as revolutionary.

"Israel is neither weak nor poor but it does not want to dominate the Palestinians. I don't think Israel needs to ask for a credit card."

The way to fight extremism is to raise the standard of living of the people and the international community should contribute to building "the infrastructure of a modern economy" in the region.

"The higher the standard of living, the lower the standard of violence. It is because of this that we are trying to develop economic activity. It is not for us but it is for the future of all of us."

"Poverty, bitterness and disappointment shape the ground for violence and hatred. So we have to go the right way and it is a long way."

The world community

should help to ensure that "all people and every people will have the ability to enjoy an economic take-off and reach the heights of income, social and economic, which exist in many parts of the world."

Mr. Peres rejected charges that Israel was impeding Jordanian exports to the Palestinian territories for considerations of its own commercial interests and said his country was encouraging Jordanian trade based on competition.

"We are not stingy and we will not be narrow-minded in our approach," he said, noting Israel has allowed the export of Jordanian products into its own market but that the very concept of trade warranted competition. But, "we are doing it with a big deal of goodwill because we have deep feelings for Jordan."

"We want to make the (political) Jordanian-Israeli relationship a real success story in economic terms as well," said the prime minister, specifically referring to development projects in the Jordan Rift Valley, expansion of the Aqaba airport and cooperation between Jordanian and Israeli private sectors.

Economic dividends of peace would take time to materialise — "two, three years, (and) we cannot watch it with a stopper in our hands" but Jordanian-Israeli agreements on coop-

eration in various fields and studies on joint projects have "planted the seeds and prepared the ground."

"There are many beginnings in a very wide field of domains," he said.

Israel is also seeking to develop joint projects with Jordan involving sophisticated technology, and "I don't have the slightest doubt that the Jordanian people will soon begin to see a real increase in their per capita income," he said.

Mr. Peres dismissed assertions that Israel was seeking economic domination of the region. "The whole idea, as expressed by some circles in the Middle East, that Israel is going to dominate the Arabs is nonsense," he said. "Modern economy is not based on domination but free market competition."

"Israel's exports do not depend on the exports of vegetables or something to the Palestinians or to Jordan. Israel is basically dealing in hi-tech, and our markets are in Europe, in Japan and other countries, and our interest in dealing with Jordan was not based on economic reasons."

Israel, Mr. Peres said, has "cooling but extremely positive feelings and good wishes for our Jordanian neighbour."

"We respect the Jordanian independence, the Jordanian judgement, the Jordanian culture, and we hope to live as good neighbours."

Peres: Peace with Syria possible in 1996

(Continued from page 12)

after we deepen our negotiations with Syria. This is the view of the Syrians, the Israelis and the Lebanese. The rest is speculation without touching the ground.

Q: Even if it comes from the president of Lebanon?

A: He did not suggest anything. He says we shall negotiate together or parallel to the negotiations with Syria. He did not say whether he will negotiate separately or ahead of the Syrians.

Q: How do you see countries like Iran, Iraq and Libya fitting into the new regional order?

A: Iran, Iraq and Libya are not part of the region, but a problem of the region. They are a problem for everybody not only for us.

I don't know of a modern country that would like to be submitted to the whims of fundamentalists. The problem of Iraq is Saddam Hus-

sein. The problem of Iran is the very extreme views of the Khomeini-led movement. Libya has a very unique leader. So, you see, it is problematic.

Q: What are Israel's options in the event of Iran developing nuclear weapons?

A: I don't think we are in any mood to threaten anybody or frighten anybody with these sort of declarations. But if Iran produces nuclear weapons and if I were a member of any other Arab state, a member of Iraq, a member of Saudi Arabia, I would be very worried.

Q: Israel has been accused of being behind the killing of Yahya Ayyash. Would you have any comment on that?

A: I never knew that Ayyash was such a great saint. He was responsible for the killing of 60 Israelis, innocent Israelis, and the injuring of more than 300 others. Why are people surprised that he

Israelis did not go to mourn his death? Why should anyone in Israel do that? He was not a saint and was not a hero in our eyes because he killed women and children. He was not fighting on the front. I was a little surprised by all those demonstrations. I don't see any room to participate in the whole episode.

Q: Hardliners argue that the killing showed Israel was not committed to honouring peace with the Palestinians.

A: Why, was Ayyash a great leader of peace?

Q: It is based on an argument that Israel went out of its way to eliminate someone...

A: First of all, Israel did not say anything like this. It did not say anything like that. At the same time, neither will Israel describe Ayyash as a great leader of peace in the Middle East. Who said the hardliners are right? The hardliners are wrong.

'Jordan has no policy of interference'

(Continued from page 1)

In dealing with a working paper by Dr. Fadel Al-Jalabi, Prince Hassan said the paper tackled in depth the economic pretexts given by Iraq for its invasion of Kuwait and the repercussions of the ensuing war.

The writer concluded his paper by an important part dealing with the economic impact of the crisis on the whole region, Prince Hassan said.

He said he also read another paper by Dr. Hazem Saghiya on "the political thought of the disaster" and described the paper as a serious attempt to analyse the Iraqi political thought which led it to invading Kuwait.

He also said he read other papers by Dr. Mohammad Al-Ansari on the structure of political culture and Arab political behaviour, by Dr. Yahya Al-Jamal on the absence of institutionalisation, and by Dr. Hassan Ibrahim on children's education in Kuwait and Arab countries.

After reviewing these papers, Prince Hassan asked: "Was the nature of inter-Arab relations which prevailed during the oil boom period one of the reasons for the Arab position on Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and is it permissible for us to use this element in our analysis to know if our dealing with our inter-Arab relations on financial and oil basis were a

reason to the laxity in these relations and a reason for not supporting the victims of aggression?"

Prince Hassan also asked if the way the Gulf war was financed was a pretext for the heavy destruction caused to the infrastructure in Iraq and the state of Arab relations in view of the Gulf war as well as the Middle East peace process, which he said was a result of the war.

The Crown Prince also called for means to contain wars and establish peace in addition to defining relations between Arab countries.

Crown Prince Hassan said later Wednesday said Jordan sympathises with Kuwaiti prisoners held in Iraq as it sympathises with the Iraqi people who are suffering under the international embargo imposed on their country.

Chairing the final session of the ATF symposium, Prince Hassan said the embargo should be lifted to end the suffering of the Iraqi people.

He said the ATF symposium was an intellectual meeting that does not advocate condemnation or boycott, urging the forum to make its conclusion available to the largest number of people in the Arab World.

Participants in the sympo-

sium held a press conference Wednesday and said the meeting discussed issues of extreme importance to the Arab Nation.

ATF Secretary General Ali Omleil said the symposium was planned since April 1994 and has nothing to do with any recent developments.

The symposium, Dr. Omleil stressed, is not political, but intellectual.

Dr. Mohammad Rumeihi, a participant, said the symposium aimed mainly to gather Arab intellectuals in their personal capacity, and did not intend to launch dialogue between Iraqis and Kuwaitis.

Dr. Rumeihi said the Gulf war was a disaster and what is important at the present is to find means to get rid of the results of this disaster.

Another participant, Dr. Mahdi Hafez, described the symposium as historical, saying it was the first time that Arabs discuss one of "their hot issues."

He said any solution to the problem in Iraq should be a comprehensive democratic solution that would give the Iraqi people their Arab role and status.

He commended Jordanian efforts aiming to alleviate the suffering of the Iraqi people and said other Arab countries can do the same to end the plight of the Iraqi people.

Hijackers demand end to assault

(Continued from page 1)

manded by Moscow, the foreign ministry said.

The commandos on the ship want Russian forces to halt an attack on Chechen guerrillas holding dozens of hostages in the town of Pervomayskaya in the republic of Dagestan near the Chechen border and let the rebels go back to their secessionist republic.

On Wednesday, a Turkish Chechen leader said Akhaz commandos were behind the hijack and had carried out the operation without the prior knowledge of Chechen separatist leader Dzhokhar Dudayev.

Russian heavy artillery took over the fierce assault on Chechen hostage-takers in Pervomayskaya on Wednesday, ruthlessly punishing the rebels — and any of their surviving hostages.

Russian commandos pulled back from the village as multiple rocket launchers, helicopter gunships and heavy artillery took up the battle against the Chechen guerrillas, who took their hostage-taking operation into a ninth

day.

Russian forces appeared in no mood for compromise as they sought to annihilate the Pervomayskaya rebels, who launched their hostage-taking operation last Tuesday in a bid to secure a Russian troop withdrawal from Chechnya.

The brutal bombardment of Pervomayskaya came after Federal Security Service (FSB) spokesman Alexander Mikhailov vowed that the assault against the rebels, who were still holding dozens of hostages, would end later in the day.

Russian special forces were ordered out of the village and Grad launchers proceeded to fire salvos of a dozen rockets each at the smoking ruins of the village, once home to around 1,400 people.

"We are completing the operation and we have taken the troops back to the edge of the village," said Mr. Mikhailov, adding that "now we are in a situation where it is not a question of liberating hostages."

"It is clear that the hostages are being executed. The

Chechen baodits have ordered (rebel leader Salman) Raduyev to liquidate the hostages," Mr. Mikhailov told reporters.

He said only a handful of hostages were left alive, while Russian military officials outside the village said 41 people had been brought out of the village since the assault was launched Monday.

Before the assault, the 150 rebels were holding more than 100 hostages in Pervomayskaya, most of them civilians brought from the Dagestani border town of Kizlyar which they stormed last Tuesday.

Movladi Udugov, spokesman for separatist leader Dudayev, denied the reported executions. He said 16 hostages were "killed by Russian shelling" and "many other captives were wounded."

He said the hostages were "in trenches and shelters along with the Chechen fighters," and added on Moscow Echo radio that the rebels had offered in vain to free hostages Wednesday.

Bosnia pullout is on track

(Continued from page 1)

an IFOR spokesman said Tuesday 150 remaining in the northwestern Bihac region were on the point of leaving.

"There is no reason to believe that (the fighters' departure) will not happen on time," he said, although recent reports suggested some had obtained Bosnian passports and regrouped in the central city of Zenica.

Meanwhile Bosnian Foreign Minister Mohammad Sacirbey offered to break the prisoner swap impasse in exchange for guaranteed access to mass grave sites.

The release by Friday of Bos-

nia's three antagonistic factions has been delayed by wrangles over allegations that thousands have been left off prisoner lists.

"We are prepared to move forward with all the elements of the prisoner release programme if IFOR assures the freedom of movement and access to... the suspected mass grave sites near Ljubija and Srebrenica within three days of the prisoner release," Sacirbey said.

Recent media reports suggested thousands of corpses are being disposed of in a disused mine near Prijedor in Serb-held northwest Bosnia

to cover up evidence of mass killings carried out by the Serbs during "ethnic cleansing" of non-Serbs.

Saodro Barana, representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Serb-held Bosnia, said the warring parties were "not willing to co-operate or to comply with the (Dayton) agreement."

Arabs urged to ease social impacts of reforms

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab officials opened a conference on economic reforms Wednesday with a call on member states to try to ease the social impact of such programmes.

Officials addressing the two-day conference on "the social impact of economic reforms in the Arab countries" said restructuring programmes would naturally hurt living standards and aggravate unemployment in the short run.

"Experiences have proved measures and policies of economic correction programmes will have their social costs, which could be high in some cases at least during the transitional stage," said Jassim Al Manai, director of the Abu Dhabi-based Arab Monetary Fund (AMF).

"Such policies could lead to a decline in real incomes and levels of consumption in the short-term while priva-

tisations will result in the disposal of some workers," he said.

"Studying and evaluating the social effects and adoption of appropriate measures to ease them will give greater credibility to economic reforms in the Arab World and guarantee their viability," he added.

Many Arab states have been involved in reforms to tackle their economic problems, mainly slow growth rates, unemployment, inflation, deficits in their budgets and balances of payments and accumulating debt.

Experts have attributed such problems mainly to inadequate economic policies, misuse of funds and decades of government domination of the economy.

The reforms include privatisations, improvement of investment laws, development of stock markets and incentives for the private sector.

The reforms gained momentum in the past few years after Gulf oil producers slashed financial aid to fellow members in the Arab League because of a sharp decline in oil prices. The decline has also forced Gulf states to carry out their own reforms, which involved rationalisation of expenditure.

Several Arab countries have reported positive results from the reforms, with their budget deficit lowered and the gross domestic product (GDP) picking up.

Official figures for the period between 1991 and 1993 showed the combined Arab deficit was trimmed from \$68.1 billion to \$40.6 billion while the GDP grew from \$438.8 billion to \$507.6 billion.

But the reforms in most member states have been slow while other members have been hesitant to start such programmes.

Mr. Manai, a Bahraini, said some Arab countries have recorded lower deficits in their budgets and balances of payments, stability in their currency exchange rates, and an improvement in investment rules and incentives.

"But what has been achieved from economic restructuring programmes in the region still falls short of ambitions," he said.

"The social perspective is one of the main challenges facing economic decision-makers in the Arab countries. This explains the hesitation and relative slowdown in the implementation of important reform programmes, especially the sale of public institutions to the private sector," he pointed out.

United Arab Emirates (UAE) minister of state for financial and industrial affairs, Ahmad Al Tayar, said Gulf states were maintaining aid to other Arab

states despite lower oil income and he urged industrial countries to increase assistance to help Arabs press ahead with economic reforms.

"Reforms have become inevitable and unavoidable. It is not wise to keep postponing them because allowing further financial imbalances and deterioration in the various economic sectors makes it more difficult to tackle them in future," Mr. Tayar told the participants.

"As the main target of economic development is to improve the living standards of the people, the social effects of reforms should be identified and carefully studied in order to alleviate them, especially on low-income classes. The negative effects of economic reforms could jeopardise the entire process if they are not tackled," he concluded.

Magazine alleges Russian banking crime-ridden

NEW YORK (R) — Russian organised crime now controls between 50 and 80 per cent of the country's banks and has turned Russia into one of the world's major money-laundering centres, New York Magazine has said.

The magazine, publishing the results of an eight-month investigation by reporter Robert Friedman, said that Russia has also become a major consumer of American \$100 bills — cash the article said was used to fuel illegal activities, including drug dealing.

"The Russians have figured out a loophole and have been able to infiltrate the international banking system," Mr. Friedman said in an interview.

Mr. Friedman said that from January 1994 to the present, more than \$40 billion in new \$100 bills have been shipped to Russia to meet orders from Russian banks, an amount that far exceeds the total value of all roubles in circulation.

His article added that from Monday through Friday of any given week, at least \$100 million a night is flown from New York's John F. Kennedy Airport to Moscow, where the money "is used to finance the Russian mob's vast and growing international crime syndicate."

The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank has sanctioned the selling of the enormous amount of \$100 bills and the New York-based Republic National Bank, which specialises in selling currency, has taken a lead in providing the cash to Russian banks, Mr. Friedman said.

A spokesman for Republic National Bank said that Mr. Friedman's article with respect to the bank was "false, malicious and defamatory, a concoction of lies, misin-

formation and innuendoes" compounded by quotes from unidentified sources. The spokesman added that Republic's lawyers "are reviewing the article and will take appropriate action."

Mr. Friedman said the shipment of the money to Russia was legal because the banks in Russia ordering the funds from U.S. banks are chartered and officially recognised.

The money is purchased on behalf of Russian banks by American banks with whom the Russian banks have accounts, a spokesman for Republic said, adding, "the money is already in the U.S. banking system."

In his article, Mr. Friedman quotes from a U.S. State Department cable the magazine obtained in which a top Russian banking official cited estimates that anywhere from 50 to 80 per cent of Russian banks were under the control of organised crime.

The official, Viktor Melnikov, the Russian Central Bank's director for foreign exchange control, also "warned that much of this (imported money) was being used for illegal purposes, including narcotics trafficking."

Mr. Friedman quotes a former New York state banking official as saying, "Republic's guilty of wilful blindness, though not in technical violation of any law."

He also quotes an official in the Federal Comptroller of the Currency Office as saying, "that money is used to support organised crime. It's used to support black-market operations. In my personal opinion, this is an absolute abomination. It should not exist. Yet it appears that at least part of the federal government sees nothing wrong with it."

Soros: Drastic change needed to ensure Japan future

TOKYO (AFP) — International financier George Soros said Wednesday that Japan was a good bet in the near-term, but its financial sector and way of thinking needed a drastic overhaul if it was to avoid future crises.

Mr. Soros, who controls a powerful investment fund, said Japan had just been through "a tremendous financial crisis, a banking crisis" that exposed massive bad debt and undermined confidence in its financial system.

"I'm very optimistic on Japan in the near-term, but I am equally concerned that unless there is a radical structural change there will be another crisis some time in the future because this financial machine as it is today I don't think is viable," Mr. Soros told foreign correspondents.

He went on to say: "If people don't think for themselves, I don't think Japan will be a viable society."

Mr. Soros said that at the root of problems in Japan's financial system — sent reeling last year under a series of collapses among financial institutions, the billion dollar Daiwa Bank fraud scandal in New York and the massive bad debt problem — was a lack of individual thought in a consensus dominated society.

While "this consensus-dominated mentality" allowed Japan to develop a "fantastic" industrial base capable of producing enor-

mous wealth, the surplus it produces is then handed out to the financial machine.

"The financial machine is equally fantastic, more so perhaps, in wasting those resources," he said, because it was not prepared to operate in a free market, mired instead in a directed market driven by the authorities, consensus and executives "who can be described better as bureaucrats."

"They know very well how to operate in that market, the directed market, but they are not prepared for a free market where people have to think for themselves," he said.

Mr. Soros went on to say that "Japan really has to be concerned about the open system that prevails in the world and not seek a mercantilist domination within that system."

"This surplus the industrial machine is capable of generating is a tremendous source of power and Japan has to find its place in the world. (But) unless it changes its mentality and opens up in some form I don't think Japan will be acceptable to the world as a leading power, perhaps the leading power, in the 21st century," he pointed out.

On Tuesday, financier George Soros recommended Japanese stocks as the best place for world investors to put their money at present and predicted the dollar

would continue its advance against the yen.

Mr. Soros is regarded as an influential figure whose investment opinions are closely followed in financial markets. His comments at an investment seminar in Tokyo buoyed Japanese stock prices but did little to stir the currency market, which found his keenly awaited speech something of an anti-climax.

"The best opportunity for world investors in Japanese equities, because rising liquidity is very good for the equities market," Mr. Soros said in a speech to the Global Investment Seminar, citing corporate restructuring and the benefit of a weaker yen as likely to boost firms' profits.

Mr. Soros also said he did not think Japanese stocks were too expensive.

His remarks, which came in the last 10 minutes of trade on the Tokyo Stock Market, helped push the key Nikkei average beyond the 20,500-point level.

On the subject of the currency market, Mr. Soros said he expected the yen to depreciate through 1996 because growth in Japan's money supply was faster than that of the United States.

"We believe that Japanese authorities will continue to maintain a more stimulative policy than that of the U.S., and that the yen will depreciate through 1996," Mr. Soros said.

But regarding a meeting of the Group of Seven nations' top monetary officials in Paris on Jan. 20, Mr. Soros said while he did not know what statement would emerge from the meeting, he did not expect it to have any long-term effect.

Eisuke Sakakibara, director-general of the Japanese finance ministry's International Finance Bureau, told the same seminar that the economic fundamentals of Japan, Europe and the United States pointed to a stronger dollar.

Mr. Sakakibara's comments are keenly monitored by the currency market because he was involved in driving the dollar back up from its record low of 79.75 yen bit last year.

Despite the two men's remarks, the dollar eased slightly against the yen on liquidation by traders who had been excited about the prospect of speeches by Mr. Soros and Mr. Sakakibara.

"The speech was plain and contained nothing insightful, but perhaps you cannot expect that from any hedge funds," said a senior

Japanese city bank trader.

Hungarian-born Soros is considered one of the world's most successful hedge fund managers. His fame grew in 1992 when he was dubbed "the man who broke the pound" after raking in profits by selling sterling on the expectation that Britain would be forced to pull its currency out of Europe's exchange rate mechanism (ERM).

In his speech, Mr. Soros also tipped bonds as an attractive investment, but said Japanese bonds had less allure than others. The Japanese bond market showed little reaction.

Turning to the United States, he said U.S. monetary policy was probably too tight in light of recent economic indicators and that this "will hinder the U.S. economy over the next few months."

Europe, meanwhile, would remain in economic difficulties throughout 1996, Mr. Soros said, adding that the current drive for European monetary union was inhibiting growth and that "the dampening effect of these policies may become more pronounced."

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Get that plan working the morning today which gain your fondest aims then explain it to your k ones later this evening.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You understand aspects for the days ahead and can get started on a new project today, but one who is crafty.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 20) Give some worldly plenty of thought then do physical activities which required today, but take easy later this evening.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 21 to July 21) Study into methods which can help attain a loftier position in Make new contacts who most worthwhile.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Study every phase of an activities ahead of you then today you can have them very well by concentrating on new ideas.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Plan an attainment for the days ahead in the morning, but tonight avoid a disagreement with a neighbour or the could be conflict.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Get busy make your surroundings more functional and beautiful today and you can work efficiently and be more pier in your duties.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Be only congenial fellow associates during the daytime today later tonight don't try to in your ideas on others.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a good day today to make a home more comfortable establish more harmony with your loved ones who reside under your roof.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) You are thing cleverly and can improve your interests and relationships early this morning and later this evening your success.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You can finances wisely today so that you soon have a great abundance. Consult with expert about the proper you own.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Study your ne and then contact a knowledgeable expert who can of assistance of you and good result for your can activities.

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, JANUARY 19, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Be charming with others gain their goodwill by being thoughtful. Make new worthwhile contacts with knowledgeable individual.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Follow your passions; plus advice of loved ones. Keep promises made this evening, though it is boring.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 20) Find better methods for gain your personal aims and guard your interests. A fellow associate has sound advice at a new project.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 21 to July 21) A bigwig gives advice today so that you expand in outside projects. Be careful not to be seduced by this individual.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) may get a message which can inspire you to great success. Be careful not to get family affairs at this time.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Find some better through which you can add your present abundance. Talk look at your mate from a perspective.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Be more enthusiastic about the career activities ahead of you and can handle them efficiently and wisely at this time.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You should with a dynamic fellow associate and get excellent results in business at this time. Get little completed as efficiently as possible.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) This is a morning today to make plans the entertainments you desire the days ahead. Avoid one is tricky.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Plan what you to do with your family during days ahead is wise in the morning so that you can get many it completed efficiently.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is an ideal today to get many tasks completed in the business world the use of some slightly different methods of operation.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Concentrate on how to a greater income and comes with a new idea. Get into a profitable outlet of operation.

Birthstone of January: Garnet
Rose Quartz

THE Daily Crossword by Elizabeth Gorski

ACROSS

- 1 Jewish mystic
- 6 Human rights org.
- 10 Norwegian king
- 14 Saudi's neighbor
- 15 Weather word
- 16 Change for Julio
- 17 Feudal figures
- 18 Job for a dummy?
- 20 Be super at
- 21 Atomizer
- 22 Fourth letter
- 23 "Continental" rock group
- 25 Elaborate meals
- 27 Places for new recipes?
- 32 Much-publicized drug
- 33 Jetson's son
- 34 Made public
- 38 Snob
- 40 Mubarak's predecessor
- 42 Roman fiddler
- 43 Vertebrate
- 45 Actress Phoebe
- 47 Hush-hush gp.
- 48 Mensa Society qualifiers?
- 51 Suspension
- 54 Lagomorph
- 55 Mischievous child
- 56 Sponsorship
- 60 Climbing vine
- 63 Gustatory exam?
- 65 Spoiler, of a kind
- 66 Double curve
- 67 Sensible
- 68 Choose
- 69 Twiggy home
- 70 Cupid
- 71 Secretaries

DOWN

- 1 Stockings
- 2 Trading letters?
- 3 Mocking
- 4 Overrun
- 5 Eschew
- 6 Rainbow shapes
- 7 Find fault
- 8 Prevaricator
- 9 Dangerous child
- 11 English borough
- 12 Something of value
- 13 Goes to the polls
- 19 Laughing —
- 24 Suffers
- 26 J. — Joshua
- 27 Evening song
- 28 Pound of poetry?
- 29 Outline
- 30 Scote endings
- 31 Hotel chain name
- 35 Takes part in play
- 36 Ontario neighbor
- 37 "I say..."
- 39 Courage
- 41 "E.T." co-host
- 44 Blues
- 46 Burned
- 49 Harmful fly
- 50 Maryland bird?
- 51 Make a play for
- 52 Publicist's concern
- 53 Cathedral areas
- 57 Equipment
- 58 "This — laughing matter"
- 59 Holy woman: Fr.
- 61 Ascot locale
- 62 B.A. word
- 64 Asian New Year

Yesterday's puzzle solved

LIMP LOCAL SHAH
AGEE ENATE HONE
MOOS NINTH ASTA
ATWOOD COURT MEAD
KEEN DEALS
GUITAR CUSS
AESOP OARS FEY
FLEMING WOOD CASS
FEE ALEG OPINE
TAPE STARER
STEAM PATE
TILLY FOSTER RYAN
ITAL OHAIRE EELY
CATO OILER DATE
KNEW TOMES SHOT

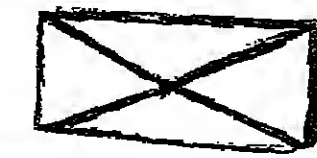
THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen

"Your wife wants you to bring home a loaf of bread, a gallon of milk and a halfway decent attitude."

Peanuts

Andy Cap

Mutt'n'Jeff



Business & Finance



Dutch entity to provide expertise to local companies

By Khattab Salman
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The regional coordinator of a Dutch consultancy group Wednesday included a five-day visit to Jordan during which he visited local firms to provide them with administrative and management expertise, according to the Jordan Export Development and Commercial Centre Corporation (EDCC).

Too De Broekert of the Netherlands Management Consultancy Programme for Developing Countries (NMCP), based in the Hague, visited over 14 industrial, service, tourism and trade companies to look into a possibility of providing them with experts.

JEDCO, one of the two local representatives of

NMCP, has signed an agreement with the Dutch programme last October with the aim of promoting good and smooth contacts between NMCP and potential client companies.

NMCP clients are, in the first place, small and medium enterprises as well as educational, community, administrative, and other institutions.

The other local representative of NMCP is Tariq Shaded, a Jordanian businessman who mainly concentrates on health, educational, research, and agricultural sectors.

According to the agreement, NMCP would review applications forwarded by local companies in order to provide them with experts from NMCP in all fields related to the local firms' activities.

The services of the expert will be free of charge but, the local company has to pay for his accommodation and transportation costs. There is no minimum period of staying with the local firm, but it can last as long as six months.

NMCP is one of several bodies with which JEDCO had signed agreements to benefit from its support in professional training and qualification of personnel. Main orientation is towards technical fields.

JEDCO has Senior Expert Service (SES) of Germany, British Executive Service Organisation (BESO), the Japanese External Trade Organisation (JETRO), and Senior Volunteer Program of Japan (SVJP).

Produce prices are lowest in several years

AMMAN (Petra) — Wholesale and retail prices of fruits and vegetables in the local market in the first week of this month were the lowest in several years, an official at the Ministry of Supply said.

The official attributed the drop in agricultural produce prices to the rise in supply caused by the relatively warm and dry winter season.

The official said it was unusual to have fruit and vegetable prices in winter as they are in the summer, which is the case this year.

He said he expected that prices would continue to drop or at least to stabilise for some time, adding that prices might rise in the first few days of the fasting month of Ramadan, which is expected to start Sunday or Monday, before dropping to the current prices.

Usually, demand for vegetables and fruits in the holy

month rise as people tend to buy more than their actual needs of food supplies.

The official urged citizens to buy only their needs of food supplies during the month to avert any rise in prices and reassured them that all commodities will be available in the market as usual during the lunar month and afterwards.

He stressed his ministry's keenness to strictly monitor prices of commodities in the holy month with the objective of protecting consumers' interests.

According to the official, vegetable prices during the first week of this month dropped by 43.8 per cent when compared to previous years. The official said garlic prices were an exception, since their prices witnessed a rise of about 47 per cent due to the drop in supply.

This prompted the ministry

to allow the import of garlic during Ramadan to stabilise its prices, the official noted. He said prices of lemon also rose by 0.7 per cent.

He added that fruit prices in general dropped by about 10 per cent. The drop in fruit prices is less than vegetable prices because Jordan's exports of fruits exceed that of vegetables.

The Kingdom's exports of fruits constitute 90 per cent of its agricultural produce to Arab Gulf countries.

Meanwhile, chairman of the board of directors of the Jordan Poultry Marketing Company (Duleil), Salem Al Lawzi, said the company has about 1,500 tonnes of frozen poultry meat which will be offered in the local market during Ramadan.

Dr. Lawzi said about 8,000 tonnes of fresh poultry meat will also be offered in the market during the month.

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Revenues collected from land, real estate deals during 1995 amount to JD 63.6m

★ THE LAND and Survey Department collected JD 78.12 million in fees last year, up 22.8 per cent from the JD 63.63 million collected in 1994. An official source attributed the increase to higher demand for land and real estate in addition to higher prices in some areas in Amman and other locations in the Kingdom. Land prices have surged in western and southern areas of Amman as a result of optimistic expectations that investments would rise at certain parts of the country. The highest revenue was collected in September 1995; JD 8.25 million compared to JD 6.5 million collected during the same month of 1994. October was also a good month as revenue amounted to JD 8.04 million (JD 6.21 million in October 1994). The lowest amount has JD 4.23 collected in February 1995 (JD 3.77 million in February 1994) (Al Ra'i).

Drivers' training centres to reopen

★ THE MINISTRY of Interior has decided to reopen 28 centres for training drivers which had been ordered to close because of the low percentage of trainees who were able to pass driving tests. An official announcement that would allow the centres to reopen is expected on Saturday as it was decided that the closure period had been enough. It has been learnt that the minister has formed a committee to lay down new bases and regulations for the operation of these centres (Al Ra'i).

Shahin clarifies dispute with bank

★ IN A clarification published in Al Ra'i, the Shahin Group said that Mohammad Abdul Qader Shahin was not a member of the Group, neither as owner nor as partner, and that the dispute with Arab Ltd. was a personal matter involving the interpretation of some articles related to the indebtedness of Mr. Shahin and had no relevance to his inability to pay or honour his obligations. The group distanced itself from the Arab Company for Manufacturing Vegetable Oils and Food, saying that neither Mr. Shahin nor any of the partners in the company were partners in the Shahin Group. The company has obtained a court decision that it should be granted a JD 2 million loan from the bank on the strength of a previous agreement signed between the two parties but the Arab Bank managed to obtain a court order to stop the execution of the decision until a final resolution is reached to the case (Al Ra'i).

Civil Consumer Corporation boost sales to JD 34.5 million last year

★ CIVIL CONSUMER Corporation (CCC) sales increased from JD 27.5 million in 1994 to JD 34.5 million in 1995, the corporation's director general, Abdul Hadi Al Mahairi said. He stressed that the corporation was not after commercial profit as its goods carry a very slight profit margin that can hardly be mentioned to cover the salaries of the employees and enable the CCC carry on with its operations. Mr. Mahairi said the proof of the low prices was the wide difference between the CCC prices and those in the market as they range between five to sixty five per cent, with the difference rising as prices are higher. Noting that the CCC would not open new markets except on commercial basis and according to operation requirements, he said the corporation is currently modernising all the 30 markets it runs. Mr. Mahairi indicated that a committee was recently formed to study shortlisting the local companies that bid for CCC tenders to ensure the highest degree of quality for the products on sale. As such, he explained, there would be no way except for well qualified and technically capable companies to bid for CCC tenders. Civil servants will not find gamareddin at the CCC markets during the Holy Month of Ramadan as a shipment of 20 tonnes imported from Syria was found out suitable for human consumption (Al Dustour).

Foreign investment at AFM likely to begin showing next month

★ SEVEN ARAB and international funds, the last of which is an Italian fund, with hundreds of millions of dollars have been set up to invest in Jordanian shares and financial sources expect the foreign investment to show up at the Amman Financial Market (AFM) by the end of next month. The sources said that since the investment promotion law was approved, two funds at least have been active in looking for good investment opportunities in shares. Another Arab fund associated with a Gulf Bank has "forcefully" entered the market to buy shares of selective companies but was faced with weak offers as most shareholders were not willing to sell their shares at such low prices and were waiting for prices to come up to acceptable levels (Al Dustour).

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET				
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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR WEDNESDAY 17/01/1996				
COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ABRANK PZC	300	69240	231.00	231.00
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	500	2175	4.350	4.350
BANK OF JORDAN	500	1615	3.230	3.230
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	450	547	1.210	1.220
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK/NEW	2125	5335	2.510	2.520
THE HOUSING BANK	600	1912	3.180	3.190
JORDAN GULF BANK	100	473	4.800	4.730
JORDAN ISLAND BANK	2930	3039	1.040	1.040
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	3000	10830	3.600	3.610
WEST BANK DEVELOPMENT BANK FOR HOUSING	3004	11622	3.870	3.810
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	18250	15659	0.860	0.860
WILSONPHIA INVESTMENT BANK	600	815	1.350	1.270
BANKS SECTOR		59789	182358	INDEX NUMBER: 182.64
JORDAN GULF INSURANCE		1025	2768	2.800
INSURANCE SECTOR		1025	2768	INDEX NUMBER: 129.26
JORDAN ELECTRIC POWER	26123	43705	1.680	1.670
CRADIS DISCOUNT ELECTRICITY	150	158	1.050	1.050
JORDAN NATIONAL GREENING LINES	1000	1280	1.280	1.270
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	5700	9540	1.670	1.640
REAL ESTATE INVESTMENT	1000	970	0.970	0.970
JORDAN INFORMATION, TRADING CENTRE	1600	1820	1.130	1.080
KATZA GROUP UNIVERSITY	2150	2733	1.270	1.210
UNITED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	9950	22127	2.240	2.210
SERVICES SECTOR		47189	82248	INDEX NUMBER: 126.16
ATTACHED COST, NATIONAL MANUFACTURING		250	1.200	1.200
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES		18250	65785	3.600
JORDAN PHOSPHATE MINES		1700	3800	2.240
JORDAN METALWORKS		2120	22777	9.850
JORDAN RAYONING		320	7135	22.300
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCE & AGRICULTURE		1118	4083	3.670
THE JORDAN WOODSTOCK MILLS		1750	13293	7.600
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING		4993	22469	4.500
THE JORDAN PILES MANUFACTURING		1000	2330	2.330
BAYTA INDUSTRIES		3000	6430	2.150
DAN AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT		2000	14350	7.200
AL-SAYED & POLYMER		11700	6439	0.550
ARAB HARB CONSTRUCTION & TRADING		2250	3129	1.390
SABAH INDUSTRIES		5700	5286	0.920
JORDAN RAYONING		1600	2272	1.420
JORDAN RAYONING		700	621	0.880
ARAB CENTON FOR FRAGRANCE & CHEMICALS		1250	2133	1.700
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES		5550	17049	3.100
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL REFINERY CO.		16466	30815	1.860
JORDAN NEW CABLE COMPANY		444	517	1.170
EL-ZAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.		204	447	2.240
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES		23400	31909	1.370
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGETABLE OIL INDUSTRY		600	824	1.350
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR		105768	260711	INDEX NUMBER: 120.74
GRAND TOTAL		214271	498084	INDEX NUMBER: 152.50

UAE banks make record profits

ABU DHABI (AFP) — United Arab Emirates (UAE) made record profits in 1995 due to a surge in credits caused by an upswing in trade and government spending on development projects, officials and bankers said Wednesday.

The Gulf country's 19 national banks and 28 foreign units have also started to diversify their operations by setting up investment portfolios and investing in new fields abroad, they said.

"The national and foreign banks achieved excellent results in 1995 compared with the previous year," UAE

Minister of State for Financial and Industrial Affairs, Ahmad Al Tayar, told the semi-official daily Al Itihad.

"Profitability varied from one bank to another but it was not less than 10 per cent. Some banks recorded increase of up to 50 per cent," he said.

Mr. Tayar said the better performance was due to an upturn in economic activity, including trade, industry, services and real estate. He also cited government spending programmes in infrastructure, communication and electricity.

Banks in the UAE and

other Gulf states deepened mainly on providing credits given the absence of other major investment opportunities in the region.

Official figures showed credits by UAE banks increased to around 90.5 billion dirhams (\$24.65 billion) by the end of 1995 from 83.7 billion dirhams (\$22.8 billion) by the end of 1994. More than 40 per cent of the total loans were extended to the trade and construction sectors.

UAE banks made record earnings of around 2.31 billion dirhams (\$629 million) in 1994 because of a surge in personal loans and other credits, and higher interest rates on deposits.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3676/86	Canadian dollar	1.4642/52
	1.4642/52	Deutsche mark	1.6398/08
	1.6398/08	Dutch guilders	1.1822/32
	1.1822/32	Swiss francs	30.09/13
	30.09/13	Belgian francs	5.0053/03
	5.0053/03	French francs	1584.15/6
	1584.15/6	Italian lire	105.67/77
	105.67/77	Japanese yen	6.6540/40
	6.6540/40	Swedish crowns	6.4190/40
	6.4190/40	Norwegian crowns	5.6583/83
	5.6583/83	Danish crowns	1.4190/90
	1.4190/90	Singapore dollars	0.7417/22
	0.7417/22	Australian dollars	7.7323/33
	7.7323/33	Hoog Kong dollars	
One sterling	\$1.5340/50		
Gold (ounce)	\$398.80/99.10		

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Financial Markets		
In co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank		
Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin		
Date: 17/1/1996		
Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7080	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0842	1.0896
Deutsche Mark	0.4823	0.4847
Swiss Franc	0.5977	0.6007
French Franc	0.1410	0.1417
Japanese Yen	0.6663	0.6696
Dutch Guilder	0.4304	0.4326
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira	0.0446	0.0448
Belgian Franc	*****	*****
* Per 100		
Other Currencies		
Currency	Bid	Offer
Baharaini Dinar	1.6620	1.6710
Lebanese Lira	0.044075	0.044575
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1895
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3670	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2100
Omani Riyal	1.8336	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1933
Greek Drachma	0.2630	0.3025
Cypriot Pound	1.4925	1.5650

NBA's Suns fire coach

PHOENIX (AFP) — Paul Westphal, whose Phoenix Suns have struggled to a 14-19 record, was fired as coach of the National Basketball Association (NBA) club here Tuesday.

Cotton Fitzsimmons, a 64-year-old veteran who had two prior stints as coach of the Suns, was named coach and said Phoenix could reach the Western Conference finals for a fourth consecutive year.

"I'm really looking forward to the challenge," Fitzsimmons said. "I think this team is capable of playing good basketball and winning."

Charles Barkley's team-high 23.3 points a game were not enough to offset seven injuries that ravaged the Suns, sidelining four starters and leaving them only eight players for their past three games.

"The injuries have taken their toll and we got to a point where it was time to shuffle the cards and make a change before this season was over," Suns' owner Jerry Colangelo said.

"The bottom line is, we haven't seen our real team yet."

Barkley has been the subject of trade rumours and feuding with Colangelo, who vows not to deal Barkley even though the 1992 U.S. Olympic Dream Team member wants to end his career with a title contender.

"You don't deal when you're down," Colangelo said. "We would be willing to make a trade if it were in our best interests, but the chances of that are slim and none."

The caper for Westphal, a former Phoenix star, came when the Suns were routed 89-74 by Cleveland, scoring their fewest points in a game in 14 years.

"It's just not happening for us," veteran forward A.C. Green said. "But basketball is like life. When the storm passes, the sun will come out. We just have to stick together."

The Suns' scoring average is at a 19-year low 104 points. They lost twice to the lowly Los Angeles Clippers and suffered their first defeat at the hands of long-time loser Minnesota in 26 matchups between the two.

"People have us six feet under and are dumping dirt on us," Suns centre Joe Klenz said.

Bulls win again as Rodman gets first triple-double

CHICAGO (R) — Michael Jordan scored 32 points and Dennis Rodman got his first career triple-double as the Chicago Bulls raced to their club record-tying 26th straight home win, 116-104 over the Philadelphia 76ers Tuesday.

Rodman had 21 rebounds, 10 assists and 10 points in his 69th NBA game.

"Dennis is Dennis," said Jordan, who suffered a back injury in the fourth quarter. "Sometimes, Dennis just wants to go, and tonight we let him go."

"Michael strained his back in the beginning of the fourth quarter, he'll be okay," Bulls coach Phil Jackson said. "Our second unit finished off the game the way we hoped. We had good energy for the whole game and a beautiful first half."

Scottie Pippen added 14 points for Chicago, which tied the franchise mark of consecutive home wins previously set in 1991. The Bulls are 19-0 at home this season and have won nine games in a row to improve to a league-best 32-3.

Rookie Jerry Stackhouse scored 24 points and Ventrone Maxwell and Sharone Wright added 19 apiece for Philadelphia, which has not beaten the Bulls since December 1993, and has not won at Chicago since December 1992.

Jordan took another jab at Stackhouse, whom he out-scored 48-13 last week following his young fellow North Carolina Alumnus's comment that the NBA was "easy."

"Jerry played pretty well, but when he goes back and watches some more film, he'll realise he needs to do more things and learn to split his game between offence and defence," Jordan said.

"The Bulls are definitely playing the best ball right now," Maxwell said. "Jordan is leading them and the other guys are playing off him. Jordan is back in rare form and he's playing well."

In Seattle, Shawn Kemp recorded 31 points and 16 rebounds and Hersey Hawkins and Gary Payton added 21 points apiece as the Super-sonics posted their 10th straight home win, a 99-90 victory over the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Kemp, who shot 12-of-17 from the field, registered his eighth straight double-double.

Seattle improved to 15-1 at home this season.

Terrell Brandon scored 24 points and Dan Majerle added 21 for Cleveland, which is 1-3 on its current seven-game road trip. The Cavaliers shot just 37 per cent from the foul line (25-of-44).

In San Antonio, David Robinson had 28 points and 13 rebounds as the Spurs coasted to their fifth consecutive victory, 121-97 over the Boston Celtics.

RESULTS			
Indiana	110	Toronto	102
Seattle	99	Cleveland	90
Chicago	116	Philadelphia	104
San Antonio	121	Boston	97
Portland	87	Denver	69

EU asks UEFA to comply with Bosman ruling

BRUSSELS (R) — The European Commission said Wednesday it was asking UEFA to comply with the European Court of Justice ruling on its transfer and foreign player systems and would take "necessary measures" if the European soccer body did not do so.

"Nobody in the (European) Union is above the law," commission spokesman Nikolaus Van Der Pas said.

Van Der Pas said the commission had discussed at a meeting on Tuesday a statement by UEFA that it was maintaining its rule on foreign player limits for teams in its club competitions this season. It had decided to write to UEFA asking it to come into line, he said.

"If its reaction is negative, the commission reserves the right to take future measures," Van Der Pas added.

Another spokesman said this could include taking UEFA to court or fining it. It was not immediately clear under what EU regulation a fine could be imposed and spokesmen refused to be drawn on details.

Fine could end Graf tax affair

BONN (AFP) — German legal authorities could drop enquiries into the tax affairs of tennis star Steffi Graf if she pays a five million mark (\$3.3 million) fine, German television said Tuesday.

ZDF television reported that Graf's lawyer, Peter Dankert, had proposed she pay just two million.

Her father, Peter Graf, has been in jail on remand since August on suspicion of withholding information on his superstar daughter's earnings. He faces up between 6 and 9 years in jail if finally found guilty.

World number one Steffi Graf, 26, denies any wrongdoing on her part.

While Edberg struggled through his second five-set match in two days, losing 6-4, 2-6, 4-6, 6-2, 6-3 to French qualifier Jean-Philippe Fleurian in just under three hours, Seles disposed of Katarina Stokic of Slovakia 6-1, 6-1 in 51 minutes.

Another famous name returned to prominence. Patrick McEnroe, younger brother of former No. 1 John, overcame a miserable start to upset No. 14 Andrei Medvedev of Ukraine 6-6, 2-6, 6-3, 6-2. The younger McEnroe, ranked No. 57, was a semifinalist here in 1991.

Another casualty among seeded players included No. 9 Wayne Ferreira of South Africa, who was hampered

Atletico go through in Spanish Cup

SEVILLE (R) — Atletico Madrid moved into the quarter-finals of the Spanish Cup on Tuesday after scoring two early goals and surviving heavy second-half pressure to beat Real Betis 2-1.

The Spanish League leaders, who took the tie 3-2 on aggregate, were aided by a series of apparent blunders by referee Jose Rubio, who should have sent off Atletico goalkeeper Jose Molina for deliberate handball outside the area when the game was only three minutes old.

Atletico took control of the first half, scoring through midfielder Delfi Geli in the 24th minute and adding another just a minute later when Bulgarian forward Lyuboslav Penev finished off a fine move on the right by midfielder Jose Luis Caminero.

Betis fought back, and a headed goal from former Atletico forward Juan Sabas just after the break gave the southerners a fighting chance.

But shortly afterwards referee Rubio inexplicably failed to signal a penalty when Roberto Solozabar brought down Alfonso Barin in the Atletico goalmouth.

The referee needed police protection from a shower of objects thrown from the stands at the final whistle. Similar incidents have brought stiff fines from Spanish soccer authorities.

Agassi wins easily; Fleurian ousts Edberg

MELBOURNE (AP) — No worries, mate. Andre Agassi has mended from a knock on the knee that nearly put him out of the Australian Open in the first round.

The defending champion and No. 2 seed — competing with Pete Sampras and Thomas Muster for the top spot in the rankings — scampers around the court and belted winners from all angles in a 6-4, 6-2, 6-3 victory Wednesday night over fellow American Vincent Spadea.

Agassi banged his right knee into a post in a misstep on a metal spiral staircase in his hotel room Sunday night and, hobbled by the swelling, barely escaped being upset Monday by qualifier Gaston Ellis of Argentina in a five-set match. On Wednesday, he no longer sported a bandage on the knee.

Agassi said he has been treating his knee with electrical stimulation and ice and holding back on practice.

"By next match, it should be 100 per cent," he added.

Earlier, Steffo Edberg made the first big farewell of his farewell tour.

Edberg, a former No. 1 player and now a veteran two days shy of age 30 bowed out of the Australian Open in the second round after saving two match points.

If age has slowed Edberg, who plans to retire at the end of the year, a nagging groin injury didn't seem to hinder womeo's co-No. 1 Monica Seles.



Gabriela Sabatini of Argentina waves to the crowd after her victory in a 6-1, 6-3, 6-0 loss to Karol Kucera of Slovakia.

No. 3 Muster advanced to the third round with a 6-4, 6-4, 1-6, 7-6 (7-4) victory over Javier Frana of Argentina, and No. 5 Michael Chang breezed past Jakob Hlasek of Switzerland 6-1, 6-3, 6-3.

Womeo's No. 3 Arantxa Sanchez Vicario, a finalist last year in three Grand Slams but a winner in none, beat Germany's Barbara Rittner 6-3, 6-2 in a second-round match.

Edberg, whose six Grand Slam titles include Australian Open triumphs in 1985 and 1987, has fallen from No. 1 in 1990-91 to No. 31 in the rankings.

But no one has matched his durability. This was his 51st consecutive Grand Slam tournament — the most among active players. He also has played the most five-set matches among them, with a record of 26-19.

The ovation at the end of today's match, he said, "felt good in one way and bad in one way because I still lost the match, but at the same time you feel good about all the support that I had."

Fleurian, ranked 133rd in the world, almost didn't make it through the qualifying round.

"I knew that everybody would be for Stefan," Fleurian said. "This is his last Australian Open, and he is such a gentleman. But that didn't mean they were against me. That's a big difference."

"Gentleman" wasn't the word being used at the match between No. 8 Jim Courier and fellow American Jeff Tarango, notorious for outraging the tennis establishment by walking out of a match at Wimbledon last year, accusing an umpire of corruption.

Both say they are friends off court, but Tarango was shouting at the umpire, trying to have Courier penalised for foul language and throwing

Naoko Sawamatsu of Japan and two American seeds — No. 9 Mary Joe Fernandez and No. 13 Chanda Rubin — Sabatini beat Katarina Stokic of Slovakia 6-4, 6-3.

Majoli beat American Loren McNeil 6-3, 6-2; Fernandez beat Maria-Antonio Sanchez Lorenzo of Spain 6-2, 6-0; Rubin beat Tina Krizan of Slovenia 6-7 (7-3), 6-2, 6-3.

Advancing among men's seeds were No. 11 Richard Krajicek of the Netherlands and No. 15 Todd Martin of Denmark 6-2, 6-4, 6-4 and Martin struggled past fellow American Richey Reneberg 6-2, 7-5, 3-6, 7-6 (7-5).

Memories mingle with hope as Sawamatsu moves ahead

MELBOURNE (AFP) — One year ago, Japan's Naoko Sawamatsu played and won a first-round match at the Australian Open relying on pure emotion and instinct only hours after learning that her family's home in Kobe had been destroyed in the great Kansai earthquake.

On Wednesday, 365 days later, the 15th seed shrugged off fading bad memories of the disaster and moved into the third round of the first Grand Slam of the year by beating Linda Wild of the United States 6-4, 6-3.

"Today I looked at the calendar and saw that it was January 17," said Sawamatsu, whose victory at Flinders Park thrusts her into a rematch of the contest she won last year, the morning after the quake, against compatriot Ai Sugiyama. Sawamatsu is hoping to move farther ahead this year than she did in 1995, when she set a benchmark at major events for Japanese women by reaching the quarterfinal stage.

The 23-year-old from Nishinomiya has moved on since the day of the earthquake. Her family — none of whom were injured in the tragedy that killed at least 5,000 — has moved across the bay from Kobe to Ito to try to construct a new life.

Sawamatsu now rents a flat in Tokyo as a base for her tennis travels on the WTA Tour.

She comes from a tennis dynasty: her aunt Kazuko and her mother Junko broke ground for Japan in 1971 when they reached the doubles quarterfinals at Wimbledon, losing to Billie Jean King and Rosie Casals. Kazuko went on to win a Wimbledon women's doubles title five years later with Ann Kiyomura.

As time heals mental and emotional wounds caused by the earthquake tragedy, Sawamatsu's hopes for tennis in 1996 are growing.

"I was in shock from what had happened. I also felt guilty because I was able to play tennis while there was so much suffering going on at home."

"I feel so sorry for the families of those who died, and for people who lost their homes."

The world No. 17 will have to do quite well to beat her 1995 performance.

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U.S., Brazil in Gold Cup semis

ANAHEIM (R) — The United States beat El Salvador 2-0 on Tuesday to reach the semifinal of the CONCACAF Gold Cup and set up a clash with Brazil.

The other semi-final, on Friday, will match Group B winners Mexico with Guatemala, the best second-placed team in the tournament, who beat St. Vincent and the Grenadines 3-0 in an earlier match Tuesday.

The U.S. match-up against Brazil in Los Angeles Thursday will give the Americans a chance to avenge two recent 1-0 defeats to the reigning world champions — in the second round of the 1994 World Cup and in the semi-final of last year's Copa America.

The Americans, who beat Trinidad and Tobago 3-2 in their other first-round match on Saturday, dominated the first half on a rain-slicked pitch in front of a huge 52,000 crowd of mostly Salvadoran fans. But despite having most of the possession, they could not break through.

Eric Wynalda finally broke the deadlock in the 18th minute of the second half when a shot by John Harkes was blocked in the box. The ball broke loose to Wynalda, who chipped it delicately over goalkeeper Raul Garcia. The goal was Wynalda's 21st for



Eduardo Acevedo of the Guatemalan soccer team (right) gets his knee into the ball as he battles St. Vincent-Grenadines Andre Hinds (left) in the first half of their CONCACAF Gold Cup match in Anaheim, Ca. (Reuters photo)

the United States, tying him with Bruce Murray as all-time goalscoring leader for the national team.

Midfielder Claudio Reyna

came on as a substitute in the 75th minute and with his first touch passed to Alexi Lalas whose low cross from the left was touched home by Mar-

cello Balboa to put the Americans 2-0 ahead. El Salvador had beaten Trinidad 3-2 in its previous first-round game.

African Nations Cup

Egypt, Cameroon clash today

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) — Ruud Krol, coach of three-times winners Egypt, on Wednesday warned his players of complacency against Cameroon in Thursday's Group A African Nations Cup match here.

Krol, who played for Holland in both the 1974 and 1978 World Cup finals, had no doubts Cameroon would be a different proposition after losing 3-0 to South Africa on Saturday.

"Cameroon are wounded, and a wounded animal is always dangerous," Krol said.

Krol, who moved in above national coach Mohsen Saleh after guiding Egypt's under-23 side to the All-Africa Games gold medal in September, was aware the west African country was ill-prepared for their first match.

Cameroon, who have a history of squabbles with their federation, did not get flight tickets till late, lost a night's sleep over a flight delay, and had problems with training arrangements.

Krol added they would be much fresher and tougher opponents this time.

Egypt and Cameroon have kept a low profile since arriving at the same hotel about 10km from the centre of Johannesburg.

Cameroon and Egypt clashed in three consecutive tournaments from 1984 with honours even, although legend has it that a government minister pleaded with his Lions to miss penalties in the 1986 final lest the Cairo crowd riot.

Egypt won the shootout 5-4, foiling Cameroon's hopes of becoming the first nation since Ghana in 1965 to successfully defend a cup which carries no prize money but whose value is inestimable.

Liberia win 1st ever match

Liberia could consider themselves a shade lucky to beat Gabon 2-1 in their first ever match in the African Nations Cup finals.

Kelvin Sebbe scored an early penalty and Massa Sar added another for Liberia nine minutes after the break, before Guy-Roger Nzeng hit a spectacular freekick goal for Gabon five minutes later. Gabon had only themselves and the woodwork to

blame for not getting at least a share of the points in this Group C match as they threw extra men into attack all through the second half.

FIFA world player of the year George Weah was generally subdued in the midfield for Liberia and it was striker James Debbah who showed the way to goal with his incisive runs.

Liberia got off to a dream start with the quickest goal and first penalty of the finals when Weah was bundled down in the area by midfielder Pierre-Francois Aubamey and Sebbe duly converted from the spot.

This setback did not deter the Azingo who pressured the shaky Liberian defence with Jonas Ogandaga and Guy-Roger Nzamba on the left, and captain Etienne Kassa-Ngoma and Jean-Martin Moulioungui on the right giving Liberian central defenders Jenkins Cooper and Henry Beeto a hard time.

Aubamey almost made amends for his blunder in the 12th minute when he had a header cleared off the line by Cooper and effort with his head saved by Liberian goalkeeper Anthony Tokpah on the line just before half-time.

Liberia scored again in the 54th minute when a Sebbe dummy gave him the space to set up Joe Nagbe on the right.

Nagbe crossed accurately to Sar who easily sidefooted past goalkeeper Germain Mendome.

But Gabon threw extra men into attack and were rewarded within five minutes when defender Nzeng blasted a 25-yard freekick past Tokpah to reduce the leadway.

Gabon's territorial superiority was underlined by statistics which showed they had seven shots on target to Liberia's four and forced five corners to Liberia's one.

Both sides used substitutes as the pace of the game began to tell as Liberia held on grimly to the end — Tokpah denying a brilliant effort from substitute Aurelien Bekogo-Zolo in injury time.

CAF not concerned with low attendance

The African Football Federation (CAF) denied the low turnout for matches so far at the January 13 to February 3

African Nations Cup in South Africa would hinder their chances of hosting the 2006 World Cup.

There were about 80,000 spectators watching South Africa beat Cameroon in Johannesburg in the opening game, but the other six games so far have not reached half that figure.

South African federation executive president and African Federation (CAF) member Solomon Morewa said on Wednesday he was shocked by the poor crowds, but was adamant this would not affect South Africa's chances of hosting the 2006 World Cup.

Morewa said: "A World Cup is very different from this event. There will be thousands of fans with the money to travel to various stadiums to watch the games. Lack of money means people here have problems doing that."

"I see no reason why this would affect our chances of having the 2006 World Cup."

He added the tournament had been very well marketed, but believed South Africa's long isolation from world football meant people in this country had not nurtured interest in many of the other African sides.

Last week, South African President Nelson Mandela agreed to bid for the 2006 World Cup finals after being urged to do so by FIFA president, Joao Havelange.

African Cup diary

A billion television viewers: The African Nations Cup from Jan. 13 to Feb. 3 is expected to attract more than a billion television viewers. This impressive figure is due to the approximately 34 million televisions on the continent, the increase in the number of teams from 12 to 16 (15 since Nigeria withdrew), and because it is being held in South Africa, the most developed African country.

Record-breaking book on finale: A book of the 1996 African Nations Cup will be published after the Feb. 3 final. Publisher Royston Lamond was aiming to equal his record of having the book on the streets just 24 hours after the three-week tournament. The book he published on the Rugby World Cup, when the Springboks won the final at Ellis Park last year, was completed just a day after their emotional victory and is in the Guinness book of records.

South Africa asked to host All Africa Games: South Africa, who are currently hosting football's African Nations Cup, have been officially asked by the Supreme Council for Sports in Africa to host the 1999 All Africa Games. South Africa made their first appearance in the Games in September in Zimbabwe when they topped the medals table ahead of Egypt.

Kurtz aims for quarter-finals: Ismael Kurtz, Ghana's Brazilian coach, refused to look further than qualifying for the last eight of the African Nations Cup, despite their rousing 2-0 victory over Ivory Coast on Sunday with spectacular goals from both Abedi Pele and Tony Yeboah. Kurtz said after their Group D match: "Our first priority is to get into the last eight. To get the early win under our belts was extremely important, not only for the team, but for the whole of Ghana."

It was Ghana's first victory over Ivory Coast in this event since 1970. However, Kurtz refused to say it was Yeboah and Pele who won the match. "It was a fine team effort that won this match for us. But now our concentration turns to Tunisia." That match is at Port Elizabeth on Friday.

Port Elizabeth goes loco: Port Elizabeth's Boet Erasmus stadium, where Ghana beat Ivory Coast, has an unusual and impressive bar where supporters at the 34,000-capacity stadium can get their refreshments. An old-style train, complete with three railway cars behind it, is situated at the top of the stadium, opposite the main stand.

Food for thought: South Africa are having specially prepared meals Cup to keep them in peak fitness. Squad physician Victor Ramathesele revealed a top nutritionist has been taken on board to improve their performance. "They are eating a lot of bread rolls, potatoes, fruit juices, energy drinks, and chocolate bars — but not fat," Ramathesele said. He is also ensuring they drink plenty of water.

U-18 women's basketball team takes on Jazireh today

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan's first Under-18 women's national basketball team Friday play their first matches since being regrouped at the beginning of the month.

The new team will play the Kingdom's reigning champions Al Jazireh in the first of three friendly matches that will give their coach a chance to test their skills and narrow down the number of players to 15.

It is the first time in Jordanian basketball that a women's Under-18 team is regrouped. The Jordan Basketball Federation (JBF) initiated the idea late last year hoping to start a junior team by participating in the 13th Asian Junior Women's Championship due to be held in Bangkok, Thailand April 21-28.

After over 35 players attended practice for the past two weeks, the JBF Wednesday announced the names of an

initial lineup of 20 players which would be reduced to 15 next month before a final lineup is chosen prior to the competition.

The players mostly represent Ahli, Orthodoxy and Jazireh clubs. They are Samar Makusi, Nadine Kishkesb, Maryam Ta'ani, Randa Sayegh, Zina Farah, Hala Ghattas, Natasha Abatha, Lubna Masri, Samar Banna, Yara Kheir, Tala Fakhour, Hiba Muheisen, Ruwa Hijazi, Sirsa Abatha, Safa Sahouri, Azza Nabulsi, Ellen Shaddad, Anoud Sroujeh, Lama Abu Judum and Dana Dallal.

The JBF seems intent on reviving women's basketball in the country. Last year the senior women's national team was regrouped after a 12-year absence. The team took part in the 16th Asian Basketball Championship in Shizuoka, Japan in July 1995 becoming the first and only Arab team to do so.

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EACH LINE IN ITS TIME

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ K 4
♥ K Q 3
♦ Q 7 5 4 2
♣ Q 10 4

WEST
♠ J 10 9 8 6
♥ 7 5 3
♦ Q 9 8 3
♣ A 9 8 3

EAST
♠ Q 7 2
♥ 10 8 3
♦ K J 10
♣ 7 8 5

SOUTH
♠ A 5
♥ A 8 5 4
♦ A 8 5 6
♣ K J 2

The bidding:
SOUTH WEST NORTH EAST
1NT Pass 3NT Pass

Opening lead: Jack of ♠

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assure nine tricks while giving up the lead only once, since the defenders will knock out the remaining spade stopper as soon as they gain the lead.

There are only six fast tricks available. The obvious way to increase that total to nine is to hope that diamonds divide 2-2, a line that is against the odds. One declarer looked no further. Unfortunately, the suit split 2-1, so the defenders came to three spade tricks, two diamonds and the ace of clubs.

At the other table declarer dug deeper into the position, and came up with another line, the emergence of which was to find hearts 3-3. That was even more against the odds than the 2-2 diamond split, but the beauty of it was that the lie of the heart suit could be tested at no cost!

When everyone followed to three rounds of hearts, declarer simply forced out the ace of clubs. That assured two spade tricks, four hearts, one diamond and two clubs. What if hearts didn't break? Declarer would simply have fallen back on an even split in diamonds as the only hope to rescue the contract.

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Banned Schuster wins right to train

LEVERKUSEN (AFP) — Former German international Bernd Schuster won the right Tuesday to resume training with his club Bayer Leverkusen, who suspended him in November for below-par performances.

The controversial player, formerly of Barcelona and both the big Madrid clubs, had threatened to sue the club for damaging his reputation before judges ordered Bayer to allow him to restart training or face a \$500,000-mark (\$350,000) fine.

"We accept this judgement, but we do not wish to welcome Schuster back," said club spokesman Uli Dos.

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Peace with Syria possible this year but not assured - Peres

Israel says it is encouraged by 'new seriousness' in Syrian approach, but deal not easy because of issues

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AN ISRAELI-SYRIAN peace agreement is possible in 1996 although not assured, but there is a new and clear seriousness in the Syrian approach to peace negotiations, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres has said.

Mr. Peres also conceded that there could not be any movement in the Lebanese-Israeli track before substantial progress is made on the Syrian front.

The new Syrian seriousness, Mr. Peres said, was evident in the fresh round of negotiations that started in Wye Plantation, Maryland, in December, with the Syrians not attaching any conditions to the talks.

The prime minister, in an interview with the Jordan Times at his office in West Jerusalem on Monday, evaded direct comment on his options on parliamentary elections but said his government needed a mandate from the people regardless of the direction of the negotiations with Syria.

Mr. Peres brushed aside Palestinian charges that Israel was behind the killing of Hamas activist Yahya Ayyash, but declined to deny or acknowledge whether the

charge was true.

The prime minister also reserved comment on Israel's options if Iran develops nuclear weapons, as reported in the press, but said the Arab countries in the Gulf should be more worried about the Islamic republic's plans.

Countries like Iran, Iraq, and Libya are not a problem limited to Israel but for the entire region, he said.

Following is a transcript of the interview in a question and answer format:

Question: U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher has obviously broken new ground in the Syrian-Israeli track in his latest shuttle. How realistic is the stated objective of arriving at a peace accord in 1996?

Answer: I think it is possible but not assured. The reason is the seriousness of the questions that we have to solve. There are many important issues that have to be considered very carefully. We are trying very much to do so. But we are working without any stopper in our hands. We are ready to move ahead. We have noticed a change of mood and mind on the Syrian side and hope it will continue.

Q: Does it mean that you have found a few seriousness

in the Syrian approach after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin?

A: I will not connect it with the assassination of the prime minister, but there is clearly a new seriousness in the Syrian approach.

For example in the Maryland meeting, there wasn't an exchange of conditions. It was not a shooting game. It was really an introduction of many ideas that both sides sought to check carefully. The art of negotiating is not to take in all the conditions and try to force the other party to accept them, but to be innovative, to be creative in terms of revolutionary ideas. We could sense the beginning of it at the talks in Wye Plantation and it was continued. Now the visit of the secretary. There is an entirely new approach, more open, more candid and this holds out good promises for the negotiations.

Q: Does it also mean that the Syrian state of mind is more conducive to accepting an upgrading of the negotiations, perhaps high-level meetings?

A: I think it is today more open. It is not yet concluded, but it is more open.

Q: There are conflicting reports on your options on Israeli elections. Do you

think an achievement on the Syrian front will have an impact on your options?

A: One must understand something. Our system guarantees elections. We shall ask the Israeli public to vote. If we should not conclude our negotiations, we shall ask the Israeli public for a mandate to continue. We need a mandate anyway. If the negotiations go very far, we shall ask for a mandate for approval. If we shall not go long enough, we shall ask for a mandate to continue. It does not matter much.

By law we are going to have elections on Oct. 29. The difference is only a few months. It doesn't matter very much. It is not a revolutionary change. It is not a difference of years, not even one year.

Q: Lebanese President Elias Hrawi has repeatedly said he was ready to send the Lebanese army to take charge of security in South Lebanon if Israel withdrew from the area. There has been no Israeli response to the call. Why?

A: There was no need because we know for sure we cannot start with the Lebanese separate negotiations. The negotiations with Lebanon can be started only

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Israeli army quits Abu Dis HQ

ABU DIS (AFP) — Israeli soldiers withdrew unannounced from their headquarters in this town on the outskirts of Jerusalem on Wednesday, prompting celebrations that quickly resembled a campaign rally for supporters of Yasser Arafat.

The headquarters, perched on a hilltop with a clear view of Jerusalem's Al Aqsa mosque, was set up after the start of the 1987-1993 Palestinian uprising and became widely reviled as a symbol of military occupation.

The evacuation took place just three days before elections to an 88-member self-rule council which have been punctuated by candidate vows to establish East Jerusalem as a Palestinian capital. Ahmad Qouria, the chief Palestinian negotiator and a top Arafat adviser, lives in Abu Dis and his campaign posters appeared on the former Israeli military headquarters soon after the blue-and-white flag came down.

Mr. Qouria and other pro-Arafat candidates

streamed to the building and depicted its evacuation as a major gain, while playing down the fact that Israeli troops are still allowed to enter Abu Dis and no Palestinian police have arrived there.

An Israeli army spokesman said the building was being turned over to the self-rule authority to use for civil administration activities.

Mr. Qouria, smiling and shaking hands, pointed to the Israeli move as evidence that the Oslo agreement on limited Palestinian self-rule is eliciting tangible gains for Palestinians.

"The significance of this withdrawal is that (Abu Dis) is the closest point to Jerusalem, where you can see Jerusalem and Al Aqsa Mosque," he said.

"The last step in the redeployment has been completed," he said, referring to the withdrawal of Israeli soldiers from six main West Bank towns and more than 450 villages, which began in late November.

He urged the crowd not to miss their chance to go to the polls on Saturday. "Show the world we are a civilized people that wants peace and wants to build democracy," he said.

The Israeli spokesman said that no uniformed Palestinian police would be deployed immediately in Abu Dis, nestled up against the Mount of Olives, and that security there remained under Israeli control.

Jerusalem's right-wing mayor has accused the government of holding secret talks on the future status of Jerusalem.

"The negotiations are supposed to start in May, but they have already begun," Ehud Olmert said Tuesday in parliament.

Mr. Olmert said Israeli professors Yair Hirschfeld and Ron Pundak, who laid the groundwork for the initial Israeli-Palestinian accord in 1993, have been holding talks with Palestinians in Europe, and are formulating principles for negotiations on Jerusalem.

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Non-aligned nations seek U.N. resolution censuring Khartoum

UNITED NATIONS (Agencies) — Security Council members voted unanimously Tuesday to condemn Sudan for not extraditing three alleged extremists linked to a plot to kill Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

After the end of closed-door sessions by the 15-member council, this month's council president, John Weston of Britain, said some members envisioned further action including a resolution against Sudan.

Diplomats reported that Botswana was leading the non-aligned nations in a discussion of a text. Mr. Weston himself met with Sudanese Foreign Minister Ali Osman Mohammad Taha to complain about armed incursions into Ethiopia.

Ethiopia, which sought an emergency meeting of the council is seeking the extradition of three people allegedly linked to group that tried to kill Mr. Mubarak last June when he landed in Ethiopia for a summit of the Organisation of African Unity.

"There is a feeling that, so far as Sudan is concerned, there is perhaps more to be done in terms of complying with the requests of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) for the extradition of the three suspects, who are thought to be in Sudan," Mr. Weston said.

Council members also felt there was nothing inconsistent about the OAU still dealing with the issue while it

Deputies assail Ethiopian 'aggression' against Sudan

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Members of the Lower House of Parliament on Wednesday denounced what they described as Ethiopian aggression against Sudan and called on the government to condemn it.

"Despite all attempts to contain the situation politically and diplomatically, the Ethiopian government insists on pulling Sudan to a battle it does not want," said Islamic Action Front (IAF) Deputy Suleiman Sa'ad on behalf of the 17-member IAF block in the Parliament.

"We propose that your respectable House issue a statement expressing its total solidarity with Sudan and condemning the persistent Ethiopian aggression that is backed up by arrogant international forces and their agents in the region."

The House agreed to Mr. Sa'ad's proposal to issue a statement in this regard. Mr. Sa'ad also called on the government to take a stand on the issue.

"The government should condemn the sinful aggression and start contacts with all Arab, Muslim and international organisations to support Sudan and use Jordanian diplomacy to end the war between Sudan and Ethiopia," he said.

There was no immediate reply from the government during the session.

The IAF statement also charged that Ethiopian moves against Sudan were instigated by "outside forces" as well as Arab countries.

• We believe that

Ethiopia's aggressive moves towards brotherly Sudan do not come out of a vacuum. It is part and parcel of a conspiracy against Sudan led by Zionist and arrogant international forces," the statement said.

"We believe there are Arab forces helping the Ethiopian regime in its aggression against Sudan and its people. Our Islamic and Arab convictions warrant that a declaration be issued of our solidarity with our brethren against any aggression or conspiracy on its political regime."

In its session on Wednesday the House also observed a minute of silence to mourn member Ibrahim Shihdeh, who passed away last week after a long battle with cancer. Shihdeh was from the Baqa'a camp. He died at the age of 45.

At the beginning of the session, deputies also filed several complaints, mainly over food ration coupons and market prices.

Centrist Deputy Fawwaz Zoubi complained of an increase in customs fees on vehicles and called on the government to reschedule payment of customs duties in instalments to a period of three years as it had been the case in the past.

"While Jordanians welcomed the government's decision to improve the status of employees and pensioners with the slight increase that we all agreed upon appreciating the state's budget, we were surprised by the govern-

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ARAFAT CHALLENGER: Samih Khalil (centre), 73, the only challenger to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in Saturday's elections to a president and council for Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, arrives at an election meeting in Jerusalem (see related stories on page one and page two)

Bahrain says restoration of parliament at its own time

MANAMA (R) — A Bahraini minister said that any restoration of the country's elected parliament, a key demand of opposition groups, would take place only when the government felt that the time was right.

"Everything has its time," Cabinet Affairs and Information Minister Mohammad Ibrahim Al Mutawae told Reuters on Tuesday night when asked about the chances that parliament would be restored — a key demand of Shiite Muslim opposition leaders seeking greater representation in the government.

"Once we feel that we need it, when it is suitable for our society and development," he said in an interview.

Shiites make up about 70 per cent of the 550,000 population in Bahrain, the Gulf's main financial centre.

Anti-government unrest broke out in Bahrain in December 1994 with demands including better access to jobs and restoration of the parliament dissolved in 1975 by the Sunni-led government.

The disturbances eased in April but the violence has continued, with police using teargas and rubber bullets to quell anti-government protests over recent weeks.

When asked why the parliament was dissolved, Mr.

Mutawae said it "hindered the government" but gave no details.

"The constitution remains. Only one (constitution) item was stopped, the one on parliamentary elections," he said.

The government says it plans to develop wider representation in an appointed consultative council and has spoken of plans to allow municipal councils with greater public participation.

Bahrain has blamed some of the violence and unrest on what it sees as inflammatory political sermons given in mosques by some of Shiite opposition clerics.

On Saturday, it called eight Shiite opposition leaders to the Interior Ministry and told them to stop using mosques to incite violence and for political sermons or face legal action.

Since the warning, one of them, opposition leader Abdul Wahab Hussein, was arrested.

A Bahrain Freedom Movement statement sent to international news agencies said he was arrested for giving a speech calling for political reform through peaceful means.

The contents of the speech as reported by the exiled opposition group could not be independently confirmed. Mr. Mutawae said authorities were investigating Mr.

Hussein's case on security-related charges. His "case is a security matter, not a political matter. They are investigating."

"Different views happen everywhere. We don't try to control the people's opinions. But when they are used to destabilise the society we have to stop it," he said.

In Bani Jamra village on Tuesday, crowds waited outside of the house of Sheikh Abdul Amir Al Jamri, a leading opposition figure, after he was taken to police for questioning.

He returned after about two hours to shouts of "with our lives and our blood" from the gathering, and said the talks were "fine" and related to his sermons in mosques.

Sheikh Jamri has said the opposition was seeking through peaceful reform a "Western-style elected" parliament with Sunnis, Shiites and Khalifas, a reference to the ruling family.

At least 13 civilians were killed in the unrest, a figure which diplomats say shows the authorities have been acting with restraint, as well as three policemen. They say about 2,700 people were arrested between December 1994 and the end of 1995.

There are no official figures for the number of people who remain in jail on charges related to the unrest.

Peres backs Lahd against arrest bid

TEL AVIV (Agencies) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres on Wednesday protested against a decision by a Beirut military court to issue a warrant for the arrest of the commander of the Israeli-backed militia in South Lebanon.

The court issued the warrant against Antoine Lahd, commander of the 2,500-man South Lebanon Army (SLA), did not answer charges of high treason.

"We see this as an insult directed against the head of the SLA and we will not let this pass quietly," Mr. Peres said after meeting with Mr. Lahd. He did not say what steps he would take.

With its decision to prosecute Mr. Lahd, the Lebanese government appeared to be turning down Israel's public demand that the SLA be integrated into the Lebanese army as part of an Israeli-Lebanese peace settlement.

Mr. Lahd told Mr. Peres that his troops were promoting Lebanese security in the Israeli-run strip in South Lebanon.

"There is no peace without the guarantee of the rights, future and dignity of the people of the security zone and the South Lebanon Army," Mr. Lahd said after the meeting.

A spokesman quoted Mr. Peres as saying Mr. Lahd was "an exceptional military leader serving in one of the most exposed regions of the Middle East."

Mr. Peres called the arrest warrant against Mr. Lahd "a deliberate affront against a great Lebanese patriot."

The Israeli-equipped SLA helps the Israeli army defend a self-declared "security zone" in southern Lebanon.

"The Lebanese government would do better to fight against terrorism and respect the SLA while studying how to integrate the force into its national army within the framework of an eventual peace agreement," Mr. Peres said.

State Duma elects Communist speaker

MOSCOW (AFP) — A communist was elected to the key post of Russian parliamentary speaker Wednesday in a tangible sign that resurgent leftists plan to translate their numerical edge in the chamber into real political power.

Gennady Seleznev, 48, a former deputy speaker of parliament and one-time editor of the communist newspaper Pravda won 231 votes, more than enough for an absolute majority in the 450-seat State Duma, or lower house of parliament.

Mr. Seleznev's nearest challenger, former Speaker Ivan Rybkin, who was supported by the pro-government Our Home is Russia bloc, garnered 150 votes, while Vladimir Tukin, the candidate of the reformist bloc Yabloko, took 50.

Mr. Seleznev's victory shores up the Russian Communist Party's ascendancy in the Duma, gained at last month's elections in which the leftist bloc won 22 per cent of the votes and 157 seats.

The speaker vote also showed that Communist Party boss Gennady Zyuganov can count on the support of at least 41 other independent and Agrarian Party deputies, boosting the leftist camp's dominance in parliament to near the absolute majority of 226 seats.

Although the parliamentary speaker's powers are limited by the overall weak constitutional status of the Duma, the speaker is a powerful figure in the chamber, controlling the political agenda and often acting as consensus-builder and power-broker.

Mr. Seleznev's victory further strengthens the communists' political hand ahead of June 16 presidential voting.

Mr. Rybkin's defeat moreover represents another setback for the government of Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, which,

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China seeks help to saving tiger population

BEIJING (AFP) — China has appealed for international help to save tigers in the south of the country that are threatened with extinction. Xinhua reported Wednesday. There used to be hundreds of tigers in the highlands of southern China but the population, ravaged by poachers, has now fallen to only around a dozen, and could fall by half as much again in the near future if no step is taken to save them, it said.

Chinese experts say that at least a hundred tigers are needed to stave off extinction in the medium-term. The official news agency, quoting the state environmental protection agency, said China would turn to foreign help to gain funding and knowledge on artificial insemination and breeding techniques. At present, China's only cooperation agreement with foreign scientists on saving the tiger is with Japan, which is providing help for a project at Chongqing Zoo, in southwestern Sichuan province.

Lavish lifestyle lands Fergie in debt

LONDON (R) — Britain's Dnchess of York has run up debts of more than £1 million (\$1.5 million) by keeping up the lavish lifestyle she enjoyed as a member of the royal family, a tabloid newspaper said Wednesday. The duchess, better known by her nickname Fergie, spent over £500,000 (\$750,000) last year on designer clothes, an expensive home, foreign holidays and champagne parties, said the Sun. Her income — an allowance from her estranged husband Prince Andrew, royalties from children's books she wrote and payments for appearances in Hello magazine — was less than half that, it said.

Butler wanted for Britain's Queen Mother

LONDON (R) — Britain's Queen Mother is advertising in a suburban local newspaper for a butler because she wants to give job opportunities to unemployed men living outside London. "Under butler required for royal household in London. Please apply to comptroller, Clarence House," said the advert in the Reading Evening Post this week. The butler's tasks will include serving food, opening the door and answering the telephone at the 95-year-old Queen Mother's London residence. The salary was not disclosed and the Queen Mother's spokesman would not reveal how many applications from the Reading area, west of London, had been received.

Probe finds no signs of extraterrestrial life

SAN ANTONIO (R) — Scientists said they found no signs of extraterrestrial life on other planets in the first phase of the most comprehensive study of its kind on the issue. "It is, of course, only a start," phoenix project scientist Peter Backus said in a report on results from a year's search of 200 neighbouring star systems for "intelligent" signals. Another 800 star systems will be searched in the next few years by observers at the Parkes Radio Telescope in New South Wales, Australia. Mr. Backus to reporters at a meeting in San Antonio of the American Astronomical Society.